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**PROMETHEUS'
DAUGHTER**


by ALEXANDER BLADE

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Cover painting by Arnold Kohn, illustrating a scene from "Prometheus' Daughter"

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The

OBSERVATORY

by the Editor

YOUR EDITOR has been receiving a storm of letters from irate readers who have been taking picks on his editorial in which he said space travel was impossible. And also he has been quoted "authorities" until he is blue in the face. Well, last month we mentioned a few new discoveries. But here is the dope—

WRITE OFF your science books that the atmosphere extends out only 600 miles. Write in that it extends at least 15,000 miles. Write off that it descends to almost absolute zero in the upper limits of the atmosphere. Write in that it is 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit at a mere 400 miles out, and 18,000 degrees at 15,690 miles out. Write out that space is empty. Write in that it is full of hydrogen gas, iron particles in the shape of "needles", carbon, copper, lead, calcium... Oh heck, everything! In plain words, the new discoveries throw all the old textbooks into the ashheap.

LET'S ANALYZE those old "textbooks". How were they written? After actual observation? The scientific method? Laboratory conditions? On the scene? Heck no! They were "deductions" from very unsatisfactory observation. They were PURE IMAGINATION. They weren't even close guesses. They were SCIENCE FICTION, with emphasis on the fiction.

NOW THE new scientists (namely those of the Rand Corporation, formed for the purpose of investigating things the right way, by scientists and for scientists, on a non-profit basis) have been using new instruments, including the rocket, radar, hundreds of amazing new electronic gadgets, and they have been getting in some of that actual laboratory method. NOW they *know* a few facts. Only a very few, true, but enough to show up the guessers.

SO, AS editor and writer of science fiction for nearly 25 years, let's point out that hundreds of scientific facts of today were just "guesses" in the stories we wrote and edited. On the strength of that record, we've put our necks out on a few predictions, which a few of our readers

have been aghast to read. Let's ask those readers to investigate the new discoveries thoroughly, and find out for themselves that it's no good any more to quote the old "authorities". They just ain't authoritative any more!

THIS ISSUE is one we're rather pleased to present to you. First, there's Alexander Blade's "Prometheus' Daughter" which is featured on our cover by one of the finest paintings Arnold Kohn has ever done for us. We think the story is also a very unusual one, and Alexander Blade can feel that he's outdone himself this time.

ROG PHILLIPS returns with the sequel to "Matrix", printed last month, called "Beyond The Matrix Of Time". We think you'll find this one a brain-exerciser, and you may find that the exercise is rather strenuous. But you'll also find that what goes on in the human mind is a strange thing indeed, and what goes on in the mind of Rog Phillips is even stranger—and don't say we didn't say Rog isn't human! By golly, that guy's superhuman. He sure can take any subject and make it sound like the real thing. We can hardly classify the branch of science his story falls into, but we'd say human psychology has never been put into gadget form in better style before.

NOW, AFTER many years, we want to go overboard for a Shaver story much as we did for "I Remember Lemuria" back in 1945. We want to recommend "Battle In Eternity" very highly and we want to compliment Richard and his co-writer, Chester S. Geier, on one of the finest collaborations we've ever seen. You'll thrill to this story. It's top science fiction. And it IS science fiction, and nothing else. It will be long remembered, we are sure.

BERKELEY Livingston tells us one about a little man who takes pictures, then sews dresses on them with a sewing machine? It's an eerie little thing, and you'll enjoy it.

NORMA LAZELL Easton appears for the first time in our pages with a story of Egypt and mummies. —Rap

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Prometheus' Daughter

By **ALEXANDER BLADE**

Prometheus was chained to a cliff and the vultures ate his living body. However, his daughter was much too lovely for such a fate!



THOSE TWO lines of poetry formed like an external voice in the mind of Pedro Sebastian Arturo Jones as his bright black eyes made a final survey of the instrument panel for Unit No. 7 of the power station. His firm sensitive lips formed a half smile at the aptness of the thought.

There were two dozen milliameters on the panel, all exactly alike in the construction of their working parts. So alike that their parts were interchangeable. Yet none of them were there to measure milliamperes. Everything else but milliamperes. Radiation intensity, temperature, pressure, synchronization, neutron

density inside the shield, and even the newly discovered uncertainty-factor, but not milliamperes.

And yet, none of them actually measured anything except the milliamps that fed through it, brought to it through wires covered with shiny, colored plastic. Nothing was as it seemed to be.

Satisfied with what he saw, Pedro crossed the control room floor to the small closet where his hat and coat were kept. His jet black eyebrows drew together in a frown at the sight of the storm outside the window, the rain beating against the windows, the flashes of lightning that tore at the dark clouds over-

There, flashing into view through the windshield was the form of a woman of surpassing beauty, floating in the air before the car.



head, the peals of brittly rattling thunder.

He glanced at his wrist watch. It was nearly midnight, and he had been working since nine in the morning at completing the installation of the control panel.

In seconds he wrapped his raincoat about him with upturned collar, pulled his hat securely down to his ears, and pushed through the door, running on light feet down the dripping stone steps of the control station and through the shallow pools on the sidewalk to his parked car.

A flash of lightning planted a still picture in his mind of his car key poised an eighth of an inch from the brightly dripping door handle. Then he was sliding behind the wheel, the starter was whirring, the motor was humming comfortably, and the windshield swipes were fighting the refractive distortion of the cascade of water, revealing the deserted stretch of narrow blacktop that led to the highway from the power station.

"Nor life nor light nor time nor space..."

Pedro Jones frowned again.

"Too bad," he thought. "That space isn't something channeled through a meter so I could move the setting of a resistor and, presto, be at my apartment without having to drive all the way."

HE LOOKED at the steering wheel as he released the brake and started the car into the storm.

"In a way the steering wheel is like a resistor knob," he thought. "And my eyes like sensitive meters measuring infinitesimal currents. I adjust the resistance, so." He twisted the wheel sharply. The ribbon of highway was now in the windshield. "And the pointers in my eyes settle at the proper place on the dial of

my mind."

He chuckled.

"Space is not what it seems to be."

"Huh?" Pedro jumped. The thought had been so forceful and vivid that it had seemed almost an external voice. Yet he was completely alone.

He snorted in disgust at his nervousness, leaned forward to watch the road more closely as the headlights of an approaching car appeared around a bend ahead.

Raindrops were bouncing up from the pavement like a sea of glass marbles. They caught the rays from the blinding headlights bearing down on him, adding to the distorting effect that made distances indeterminate.

He studied the approaching pair of lights worriedly. They were weaving from one side of the road to the other, as though the driver were drunk.

He slowed, ready to take to the ditch if necessary.

"Those headlights are the needle registering the uncertainty factor," he thought. "Too bad there isn't one that can tell me the neutron density—the amount of alcohol in that nut's brain matter."

A peal of laughter exploded in his mind. It was feminine laughter! It was madly delirious, strangely loud, somehow not—vocal. At the same instant, the approaching headlights that had seemed still a block away, were coming toward him with a nightmarish swiftness.

They bathed the windshield with corruscating brilliance that blotted out the road. At the last instant it seemed that a giant hand moved them over, directly in his path.

He stood on the brake pedal. There was the sickening feeling of a skid. There was a sound that might have been thunder or the sound of rending metal. There was a louder

burst of that mysterious, feminine voice, laughing, the sound rising to a mad crescendo.

Then there was only silence, in which a voice intoned solemnly, "Nor time nor space...", and coldly brilliant stars watched with glittering curiosity.

THE SINGLE, melodious note broke sweetly, throbbingly, dying rapidly to a faint, whispering echo, that seemed to speed outward, losing itself in the scintillating blanket of distant suns.

Again it sounded, Again, and once again, its very repetition carrying an overtone of insistence, like the ringing of a telephone.

Startled at the analogy, Pedro Jones pivoted about. He was in a strange room, and had been standing before a transparent wall of glass. Across the room was a table, fastened to an instrument studded wall. The insistent note was coming from a device that looked very much like a television set.

While his mind wondered at his surroundings, Pedro felt his feet take swift strides across the room, his fingers reach out and flick a small toggle switch with a memory and experience of their own.

At once the screen came to life. In its depths appeared a three-dimensional color image of a face.

The face was that of a man, high of forehead, hair and eyebrows snow white and so fine the unruly hair seemed more an aura than individual strands. The nose was a half inch wide strip between the eyes, ending abruptly the proper distance above the well formed mouth. The skin was tanned olive. The eyes were large and alive, a deep, rich brown.

There was a frown on the face. It changed slowly to an indulgent smile.

"Dreaming again, Xyrrhmaxl?" a deeply resonant voice spoke, drawing the words lazily.

"Xyrrhmaxl?" Pedro echoed, puzzled. "You've got me wrong. My name is Pedro Sebastian Arturo—"

His thoughts froze. The words were not coming out as they should. His voice—or at least he thought it was his voice—was saying something other than what he was thinking.

"I could have been, Xantl," his lips were saying. "As you know, the stars do that. I look, and know that somewhere in that blanket of light our goddess, Lualanra, lies, enchained. My thoughts go out, searching."

Pedro Jones heard his voice. He felt the hair on his neck prickle and chill. From some hidden part of his mind an unknown "something" had taken his tongue to express its thoughts.

"My emotions, too," he muttered in his thoughts. "Lualanra!" The name had somehow conveyed a background of worship and love, and a deep sorrow and yearning.

"The moment is here, Xyrrhmaxl," Xantl said gravely. "We are all in place, ready. After you disconnect, be ready. In moments we will signal. When that signal comes press the parastasis pin and hold it until the last instant. With all of us we hope to strip Zelhub to his last thin egg-shell of neutrinium and hold that fast in the tractor of our rhodonteracts."

A third time Pedro Jones felt his thoughts freeze with surprise. The conversation he was listening to was not in English, but some utterly alien tongue, yet each word was familiar in sound, and each conveyed a definite meaning! It was as though the alien words were alien in reality, but by some strange process outside the conscious regions of his mind were transformed into understand-

able thoughts.

His hand reached out and flicked the toggle switch back to the off position. Like a man riding on the head of an elephant without the knowledge to control its movements, he moved under the will of something outside consciousness.

The screen died to a uniform white frost. He turned and crossed the room to a chair welded solid to the metal floor and strapped himself into it with expert movements.

He saw his hand come to rest with the index finger poised over a small black pin set in an oval case, recessed into the arm of the chair.

His head turned, then sideways. For the fourth time in as many minutes his thoughts froze. There was a mirror surface. There was a reflection in it of a head and shoulders. Except for minor differences it was identical with those features that had looked at him from the screen a few seconds before!

And with that shock came memory. The highway. The thunder storm. The lightning and bouncing raindrops. The oncoming headlights. The crash. Or had there been a crash? What had happened?

THERE WAS no time to puzzle over the question. He felt his finger touch the stud and press down. Instantly the starry sky changed to a panorama of swiftly moving points which changed in color from white to a turquoise to a red. Then there were no stars visible.

For a space of three seconds the heavens were a black void. Throbbing in this blackness was the sweet, musical tone of the bell in the vidophone—the signal that had sent the finger against the stud.

What had Xantl called it? The

parastasis stud. Then the sudden swift movement of stars light years away, the dropping of all light into the infra-red, were results of parastasis! What did the word mean? It was a peculiar combination; para-, a prefix meaning beyond; stasis, a word meaning state of motionlessness. Beyond motionlessness. Beyond lack of movement.

What had happened? Had the room in which he sat—the SPACE SHIP—suddenly speeded up to the velocity of light, retreating from the stars in the part of the heavens that could be seen through the glass? Or had their movements been produced by the bending of light paths by something that might be called a parastasis field—a field that brought even light to a halt? There had been no slightest sensation of acceleration or movement.

As suddenly as it had happened, just as suddenly Pedro's finger lifted from the stud and the heavens appeared again. For a photographic instant they were as they had been, motionless and serene. Then they were shot by streaming flames of fiery radiance that swept around the ship and on, until there was nothing but blue-white incandescence.

At the same time Pedro felt tremendous forces of movement course through him, as if the ship were being tossed about like a feather in the wind.

The streaming flames and the tossing of the ship ended with abruptness. The white-hot gases were receding into space with unbelievable speed.

Pedro heard himself sigh with relief. He felt himself unstrap the belts that held him, rise, and cross over to the windows. His fingers manipulated dials just under the windows.

The heavens with their stars and receding streamers of fire began to

move to the right. The ship was turning. Slowly the panorama swept by. Slowly a new scene came into view.

It was something that could exist only in the imagination of a mathematician. There were dots—pinpoints. The nearest was barely discernible as having shape. It was a space ship thousands of miles away. There were thousands of others. They formed a gigantic spherical surface millions of miles in diameter, with his own position in that surface of a sphere.

SUSPENDED in the heart of the sphere was another thing that could only exist in the imagination of a mathematician. It was a huge polyhedron whose lines were reds and blues, and whose locus points were space ships so gigantic they appeared in detail over the millions of miles that separated him from them.

From each of these points of the polyhedron, these space-ships, a green line went toward the center of the whole formation, to end against an oval shape of complete, utter darkness.

An utterly black egg! What had Xanti said? "We hope to strip Zelbub to his last thin eggshell of neutrinium and hold that fast in the tractors of our rhodoteracts."

So the lines of red and blue and green were tractor beams, the huge ships were the rhodoteracts, and the egg shaped space was a shell of neutrinium! And within that black surface was a creature or being called Zelbub!

The rest of the picture was clear, now. The millions of dots that formed the surface of a sphere were ships like the one he was on. The pressing of the parastasis pin and its release had unleashed some force

from each of those millions of ships—a force that had struck the outer defenses of Zelbub from all sides simultaneously, destroying them, changing their substance to incandescent gases that had exploded outward, shooting off into space past his ship, tossing it about like a dust mote.

And from the volume of those gases, they must have been at least a world. Zelbub had been in a shell of neutrinium at the center of a planet—and the planet had been stripped away from him!

The polygon matrix with the imprisoned egg of Zelbub at its heart now began to move. Toward the farther shell of the spherical formation it went. The dots there parted, making way for it. The sphere was breaking up into a cloud of silver dots. Pedro saw his hands play at the controls of his own ship until the polygon formation was stationary in the windows.

Now the distant stars were moving again, changing color; but this time their brilliant whites changed into the blue, the violet—and vanished.

PEDRO SAW his fingers make a few adjustments on the control board. Now everything was still. The polygon matrix was ahead, stationary relative to him. About him were the thousands of small ships, all alike and hence probably like his own, also stationary relative to him.

Again with the bizaare feeling of riding on the head of an elephant he could not control, he saw himself move over to a body-fitting couch and lay down. His eyes closed. Shortly he heard his breathing, deep and regular as though he were asleep.

It was, he knew now, Xyrrhmaxl who was sleeping. Where at first he had thought some strange focus of

his subconscious had taken his lips to speak, he now knew that it was the other way around. He was an alien focus of awareness in the mind of Xyrrhmaxl, unable to command or control, able only to be aware and to observe.

How it had happened he didn't know. Now, cut off from all except his own thoughts, he tried to reason it out. The oncoming car—there had unquestionably been a head-on collision.

There had been no feeling of pain. There had been no sensation of transition or change. One instant there had been the blinding lights, his foot straining against the brake pedal, the rending of metal, and that feminine laughter! He had almost forgotten that. There had been something else at the very last instant, so brief it hadn't made much of an impression. Was it the face of a girl flashing into view through the windshield of the other car? It might have been; but somehow it seemed to have been not only the face, but the body of a woman of indescribable beauty.

That had been it. But there was more. She had been in chains, heavy chains with black links—as black as that egg of neutrinium.

That had not been a part of the events on the highway during the crash, nor had it been any part of what had happened since then. No. It was a part of something in between. Something that marked the transition from the accident on the highway to this present drama somewhere in interstellar space.

Pedro's thought came back to the present with startling abruptness. His eyes were open. More, he was sure he had opened them himself. He blinked several times deliberately, feeling his will take hold and control the eyes.

Cautiously he tried to rise. Each

mental command he gave brought its corresponding response from his body. He hesitated. He was almost afraid to try what he wanted to do next. But he knew he had to.

"I am Pedro Sebastian Arturo Jones," he said. His ears brought him the sounds. They were not quite as he had willed them, the vowels sounding foreign; but the words were as he had commanded them to be. He was in control! When Xyrrhmaxl fell asleep it left open the channels for him to command the functions of his body!

HE STOOD up, almost delirious with joy. Fearing that at any moment Xyrrhmaxl might awaken and take over, he hurried about the ship, exploring. At the same time he was debating what course of action he should pursue.

Should he leave some evidence of his presence? A note? Or even a transcription of his spoken words, if he could find some type of voice recorder?

There were things against that. This race of people that Xyrrhmaxl belonged to was obviously thousands of years advanced over the people of the Earth. Yet what were their beliefs? Would they judge Xyrrhmaxl insane if he were to reveal himself?

Pedro chuckled at the thought. But the danger was quite serious. Even more serious, would Xyrrhmaxl himself think he was insane if he found out? To say the least, it would be quite a shock for the man to find out he had a visitor inside his head!

Another thing—for how long was this to be? The answer to that revolved around what had happened.

"Did I die in that wreck?" Pedro Jones asked himself. "If I did, maybe this is for a long time. If I didn't,

maybe I might be snatched back into my own body at any minute. Which it is would make a difference. If it's a permanent thing I could afford to be cautious, take my time about deciding what to do. If it were temporary it might be better to throw caution to the winds and use what little time I have to find out all I can about this race of cosmic humans and the scientific principles governing their almost unbelievable devices. Parastasis, for example, which can change a whole world in three seconds into a white hot inferno of gas."

And while he was puzzling over the problem of what to do he was busily exploring everything in the large room. Instrument panels, drawers in tables, details of construction...

There remained finally only the closed door that led to the rest of the ship. For some reason he couldn't fathom, Pedro had been reluctant about opening this door. He still was, as he stood looking at it. What was on the other side?

With impatient abruptness he stepped up to it, twisted the knob, and pushed it open. Revealed was a room designed for comfortable living.

As Pedro hastily surveyed what he could see from the doorway he realized that the room at his back was the pilot room, and this the living compartment. There was a thick rug on the floor with a strange, beautiful design in pastel grays, blues, and pinks. There were exquisitely carved chairs, tables, and other furniture. There were paintings on the walls.

A beautiful tapestry hung across a recessed part of the room at the far end. Pedro's feet crossed the soft rug in soundless stride to this tapestry. He reached out and pulled it aside to see what it hid.

The space behind the tapestry held a bed. It filled the whole space. It was covered with a cloth into which was woven a scene depicting flowers and birds of varieties not known on Earth, so vividly detailed that they might have been real. Yet Pedro's eyes did not see this. They did not see the bed. They would not have seen a seven headed Gorgon if it had been there.

THEY SAW only the girl who lay there, her perfectly formed, high breasts rising in the regular rhythm of sleep under the semi-transparent film of her gown, the poetry of form that was her body, outstretched in repose within the same filmy sheath, the perfection of her features, the smooth ivory of the lids that covered her eyes, the filmy delicacy of her tresses that formed a snow white pillow for her head.

"*Madre de Dios!*" he whispered hoarsely, reverting to the language of his South American childhood. He stood there for a time that might have been seconds or eternities, he didn't know. His eyes were wide with surprise, his breath loud and hoarse.

"I'm dreaming," he muttered. "This can't be!"

With a jerk he slid the tapestry open. Half fearful he reached out and touched the rising and falling breast of the sleeping girl. It was soft and yielding.

Her eyes opened. She looked up at him without moving. A languorous smile formed on her red lips. She placed a warm hand over his, wrapped her fingers around it, and drew him toward her.

Suddenly embarrassed, he allowed himself to sink to the edge of the bed, then pulled back, perspiration beading his forehead.

"Is it over, Xyrrhmaxl, darling?" the girl spoke. It was in the strange tongue, sounding foreign, yet with the meanings of the words rising from the depths of the mind as soon as they were heard.

"Yes. It's over," Pedro said in English.

The girl frowned.

"What did you say?" she asked in her tongue. She drew back in alarm—an alarm that seemed too great, Pedro thought.

If only Xyrrhmaxl would awaken and take over! If there were only some way to awaken him! In another instant it would be too late. He would have to speak again, and his speech would give him away.

But the girl's alarm seemed to vanish. Her smile came back, playful, inviting. Her arms opened in a gesture of welcome. She sat up, her head back, her red lips open, aluring, her soft body so near and yielding.

His thoughts on fire, Pedro leaned forward, the blood of his Spanish ancestors pounding in his temples. Soft arms circled his neck. Warm breasts pressed against him. Passionate, red lips met his own, hot and fierce.

His own arms circled her yielding body and drew it to him crushingly. Her infinitely fine, snow white hair covered his face.

Then—an icy hand touched his spine. His arms fell away in cold paralysis. The yielding lips drew back from him in deliberate motion. He felt himself sink to the bed, his body tingling with cold numbness.

THE EXPRESSION on the girl's face was no longer one of invitation. Instead, there was a cold smile on her face, a tinge of bitterness in it.

"You must forgive me, Zelbub, for permitting you that moment of liberties," she said. "But it is long since

Xyrrhmaxl has embraced me with such passion in his eyes."

A dry laugh escaped her lips. She stood up.

Pedro's eyes followed her movements. She seemed unconcerned that her flimsy robe hid nothing of her beauty of form as she rose and turned to look down at him.

A part of his mind was trying to discover how far the strange paralysis extended. The spot of ice still tingled over his spine above his shoulder blades. He found he could move his head, but no other part of his body.

He shook his head. "You have me wrong, baby," he said. "I'm not Zelbub. I'm Pedro Sebastian Arturo Jones."

A puzzled frown formed on the girl's face. Pedro admired it. It added to the beauty of her face as he looked up at it, framed by her ethereal clouds of white hair.

"If you are Zelbub, why don't you speak so I can understand you?" she demanded. "Surely you are not so stupidly blundering as you seem! You escape from the trap and allow yourself to be caught by one female!"

She stamped her foot.

"But perhaps you are not Zelbub," she said, her face suddenly thoughtful. "Ah. Cunning. Zelbub would do such a thing. Send a slave so that we would think it to be he himself and thus relax our grip on the neutronium grip."

Purple lights of amusement and admiration danced in the depths of her large, violet eyes.

"So you are one of Zelbub's slaves," she said musingly, pretending not to notice Pedro's admiring eyes.

She half turned, revealing the contours of her body in a new pose, her eyes watching him.

"Ah," she sighed, dropping pretense. "Never has Xyrrhmaxl given me such worship. He had reserved that for Lualanra, as do all men." She sighed again.

With impulsive movement she dropped beside him on the bed, cradled his head against her breast, covered his unresisting face with kisses.

"Free me," Pedro said hoarsely. "Free me and I will give you love such as you have never experienced." Then he groaned. She couldn't understand a word he said.

BUT SUDDENLY she drew away from him again. The puzzled light was in her eyes once more.

"Still," she said, picking up the trend of thought she had dropped. "If you were a slave of Zelbub, would he have been so stupid as to plan hastily? Would he have sent one who would give away the plan of escape with the first word he uttered? I think not. There is something here I don't understand at all!"

An uneasy light crept into the purple depths of her eyes. She crossed the room to a closet and covered herself with a robe of shining scarlet, then came back and looked down at him, the passion of the moment before replaced by a practical, analytic study.

"There is a temperament here foreign to any race that I know," she said aloud to herself. Her eyes caressed him briefly. A nervous smile fluttered on her lips. "A temperament that I like. An aura of—of—"

She compressed her red lips with sudden decision. Turning, she crossed the room and flicked the toggle switch on a vidophone that was identical with the one in the pilot room. A face appeared on the screen.

"Xantl," the girl said grimly.

Three other faces appeared on the screen in rapid succession. To each the girl said, "Xantl." Then Pedro saw the face of Xantl appear.

"What is it, Xandra?" Xantl asked in a tone of tolerant good humor.

"There is something here I think you should examine carefully, Xantl," the girl said.

Pedro barely listened. "So her name is Xandra!" he said dreamily. "What a beauti- but she's married to Xyrrhmaxl." He gritted his teeth in rage. "Xyrrhmaxl is a fool," he concluded.

"There is something in possession of Xyrrhmaxl," Xandra was saying. "I've paralyzed the body—and also Xyrrhmaxl's center of consciousness, so as to imprison the usurper and not allow him to hide in Xyrrhmaxl's superconscious centers where he cannot be found again."

"Good work, Xandra," Xantl said, his face suddenly grim. "I'll send two men to bring him. Perhaps you'd better come too. I'll send a third man to guide Xyrrhmaxl's ship home."

Xandra flicked off the vidophone and went over to stand above Pedro. There was a regretful look on her face.

"I wish I did not have to do this," she said, her eyes smouldering with repressed emotions. "Your eyes promise me all that I have ever dreamed of and hoped for in this world."

A tear formed and glistened like a winking star in the corner of her eye.

"But Zelbub would do such a thing, and I can't be sure. You understand, don't you? It would be far better to lose you and the things promised by your eyes than to destroy our hope of discovering the prison of Prometheus' daughter."

She turned her back. Her shoulders shook with silent sobs. And Pedro strained with all his will at the paral-

ysis that gripped him.

"I would sell my soul to rise and comfort you, Xandra," he said.

She turned at the sound of her name. There was a delight in her eyes.

"Your words are strange," she said. "But the way you utter my name tells me much. I will fight for you before Xantl."

She turned and began pacing the soft rug, a frown of concentration on her face. She paused and looked across at him.

"It may be," she said slowly. "That it will be permitted for you to have a body of your own."

Crossing to him, she bent down and kissed him. The passion was gone from her lips. In its place was a tenderness and love that found its response in the depths of Pedro's being.

THE THREE men materialized abruptly on the rug near the vidophone, in the space between two elaborately carved pieces of furniture that Pedro had thought were chests of drawers.

"Teleportation!" The word exploded with surprised recognition in his mind. "What next?" he thought humorously. "Parastasis, tractor beams, paralysis of a consciousness center to imprison another—instead of a half understood, semi-supersitious theory of schizophrenia—and now teleportation! Not to mention space ships that could travel so fast they shifted all radiation into the infra-red or the ultra-violet, without any trace of the effects of acceleration."

The three men looked very like Xantl—and himself as he had appeared in the bright reflecting surface in the pilot's room. They wore the same cream colored kilts and full, light gray shirt that he him-

self wore.

One of them glanced at him curiously, then crossed to disappear through the door into the pilot compartment. The other two came over and picked him up, half dragging him over to the spot where they had materialized. They stood him on his feet between them.

Pedro held his breath, waiting for whatever sensations teleportation might produce in him. He held his breath until he could hold it no longer. He let it out explosively.

"Ready," Xandra's voice sounded at his back.

The next instant the design on the wall before his eyes changed to a view of a large room. It was as if he had been watching a movie screen and the scene changed. There was no sensation at all—any more than there had been any sensation of change from the scene of the accident on the highway to residence in Xyrrhmaxl's brain.

Pedro, still held between the two men, was standing on a raised platform. Twenty feet away across a bare expanse of what seemed to be Oak flooring was Xantl.

Xandra went forward and began to talk rapidly to Xantl in a voice too low for Pedro to hear what she said. Xantl listened to her gravely, his eyes flashing in Pedro's direction often.

Finally Xantl walked forward until he stood just below Pedro, looking up at him. Xandra walked by his side, silent now.

"What is your name?" Xantl asked

Pedro took a deep breath.

"Pedro," he said. Then, slowly, "Pedro Sebastian Arturo Jones." He took another deep breath. "Pedro Jones," he said. He looked at Xantl's studious face. "Pedro," he repeated.

"Hmm," Xantl said. "Jones. A queer name. Let's hear you say some-

thing in your own language, Jones."

"Nuts to you," Pedro said, smiling sweetly. "I would like to step down off this platform and upset that smug look on your face."

"A queer language," Xantl mused. "Yet not altogether unpleasant. However, we haven't time to study it. We'll have to take you to psychosurgery and give you the power to speak in our own tongue."

Xantl transferred his gaze to the men holding Pedro.

"Bring him right back," he ordered. "Xandra and I will wait right here."

THE SCENE changed again like one in a movie. This time Pedro and his two guards materialized in a much smaller room containing furniture similar to that in a hospital.

A man more like Xantl than the others he had seen rose from a chair and laid down what seemed to be a magazine much like any on Earth, coming forward with an interested look on his face.

The melodious note of a vidophone turned him to one side. It was Xantl, who explained what he wanted done.

"Set him down over there," the man ordered, pointing to a chair surrounded by strange looking equipment.

For ten minutes the man moved things over the surface of Pedro's scalp, muttering to himself.

"Hmm," he muttered. "Activity unfocused to a great extent. Psyche center to the right of the thalamus, pinpointed but vacillating. Suprapituitary region paralyzed. Delicate. Very delicate."

A sudden, sharp pain exploded in Pedro's mind.

"Sorry," the man said, stepping away. He looked at Pedro intently for a moment. "Say something," he ordered.

"I'd like to smash your nose in,"

Pedro said politely. Then alarm froze him. "I'm sorry," he added hastily. "I didn't mean that." And all the words were in the strange tongue!

"I guess that will do it," the man said, smiling. He turned his head toward the two guards. "Take him back to Xantl," he said.

XANTL AND Xandra were still standing where Pedro had them. Pedro felt a warm glow at the way Xandra's violet eyes lit up when he materialized.

Xantl stepped forward, intense interest in his bearing.

"We're rushed for time," he said. "Will you tell me as quickly as possible who you are, where you are from, and who transplanted you—since it is obvious you haven't the ability to do it yourself?"

"I'm a nuclear engineer," Pedro said, stumbling slightly over the words as he tried to listen to his voice and form his sentences at the same time. "I'm from the Earth—though I doubt if that tells you anything. If anyone transplanted me I don't know who. All I know is that I was a split second away from death in a collision when I suddenly found myself looking at the stars from the pilot room of Xyrrhmax's ship."

"You're SURE no one transplanted you?" Xantl asked.

"Wait a minute," Pedro said. "I remember something. There was laughter. A woman's laughter. I seemed to have a brief glimpse of her. She was—it seemed she was chained."

"Lualanra!" Xantl cried. "It was she! But that casts an entirely different light on everything!"

His eyes turned to the two men holding Pedro up.

"Release Jones at once," he ordered.

Immediately the cold at the base of Pedro's neck disappeared, to be re-

placed by a correspondingly hot sensation. That died down rapidly.

The two men stepped away from him. He stood alone. Experimentally he moved an arm. It obeyed his will. Waiting for no more, he leaped from the platform where he had been standing.

There was an exultant light in his eyes. He brushed past Xantl. Xandra gasped in surprise as he caught her in his arms.

"Jones!" Xantl's voice said sternly, authoritatively. "Jones! Guards! Take care of him!"

"Oh, no!" Xandra said dreamily, her white arm waving the guards away. "LET him."

IT WAS sometime later. Xantl, Pedro, Xandra, and a half dozen men whom Pedro gathered were important officials of some sort were seated about a table eating fruits.

The fruits were familiar in a mixed up way. There were oranges that had the flavor of apples, apples that had the flavor of grapes, cucumbers that had the flavor of a swiss steak, and a completely strange fruit that had the flavor of Virginia cured ham and the consistency of an avocado or banana and a shape that was a cross between a pear and a peach.

Xantl had wanted these officials to be present while Pedro told his story. He had told it. They had listened. Then they had suggested that everyone eat. While the meal was in progress they were quite patently doing a lot of thinking about the things he had said.

Xandra ate very little, spending most of her time picking out the most perfect of the fruits for Pedro and just watching him with stars in her eyes.

At last he could eat no more. Xantl and the other men laid aside their own half eaten apple or pear or or-

ange eagerly.

"Tell us of your science, Pedro Sebastian Arturo Jones," one of them now said. The others nodded eagerly.

"You can call me just Pedro," he said. "No need to repeat my entire name. Science covers a lot of territory. What do you want me to tell? Of astronomy? Radio? Biology?"

"What are the basic physical theories of science where you live?" Xantl asked.

"That's hard to say," Pedro answered. "For the most part we have two or more basic explanations of every aspect of things, each of which can neither account for all of it nor be discarded because it doesn't."

"But surely you must have certain things well established as true," another man said impatiently. "Tell us of them—not the controversial things."

"Well," Pedro began. "We have the building blocks of things. The electron, proton, neutron, positive electron, neutrino, and meson. Each of these has a measured mass and an electric charge except the neutron and neutrino, which have mass but no electric charge. The mass is a function of the velocity. It increases in such a way that it would become infinite if the particle were to attain the velocity of light. We have the law of conservation of mass-energy which says that mass and energy can be translated into each other. I myself am an engineer in a power plant which produces energy in the form of an electric current from the energy of atom piles which get their energy from the translation of mass into energy in the disruption of fissionable atoms."

LOOKS OF disappointment were growing on the faces of Pedro's listeners. These became so strong

that he stopped talking.

"Those explanations—your scientists think they are true?" Xantl asked.

"So far as I know," Pedro said, half defiantly. "They are in all the textbooks. I haven't heard any announcement of discoveries to refute them, and all the evidence supports them."

Xantl shook his head slowly.

"Then you do not have space ships yet," he said.

"Well, no," Pedro said. "But how does that follow from what I said?"

"Tell me," one of the other men asked. "Did you at one time have a civilization high in learning whose mathematics and philosophies entered into the beginnings of your current one, so that in the beginnings of your present civilization you made certain changes in the old—and went on along the lines of the changes?"

"Sure," Pedro said. "The civilization of the Greeks. They had Euclid and Euclidean geometry. Plato and his philosophy. Aristotle and his system of logic."

Briefly Pedro sketched what he remembered of these from school. When he finished there was a deep silence. Xantl finally broke the silence.

"Tell me," he said hesitantly. "Do the legends of that civilization mention the name, Prometheus?"

"Sure," Pedro answered. "Prometheus was a god who stole fire from heaven and created man. Zeus, the god of gods, punished him for creating man by chaining him to a rock. He was rescued by another god named Hercules."

Xantl and the officials were nodding their heads gravely at every word.

"We have other things that tie in vaguely with what I've learned so far here," Pedro went on, feeling he

was getting someplace now. "One of the names of the devil, the god of all evil, is Belzebub—and that creature in the neutrinium egg is called Zelbub—very similar. For another, your names here, Xandra, Xantl, Xyr-rhmaxl, all sound like names from a language spoken by a lost civilization in America called the Incas. Incidentally, I am supposed to have Incas in my family tree, on my mother's side."

"Then you are not of a pure breed?" Xantl asked.

"Lord, no," Pedro laughed. "My ancestors fifty generations ago were from at least a dozen different races; Inca, Mexican Indian, Castilian, Moorish, Greek, Irish, Scot, Angle, Franc, Norse. I don't know how many more."

"The eternal shuffle!" Xandra whispered.

HER EYES grew large and round. She drew back from him with what seemed to be awe and fear. Suddenly she slid from her chair to the floor and prostrated herself at his feet.

"Say, what is this?" Pedro asked. He looked up from Xandra to get his answer from the men. They, too, were dropping from their chairs to the floor obsequiously.

"Now listen!" Pedro said angrily. "What the heck's come over all of you?"

"Lord Hercules," Xandra whispered hoarsely. "Forgive me for having loved you. I didn't know."

"Nuts," Pedro exclaimed—only it came out translated into the name of the fruit that tasted like grapes and looked like an apple. "Maybe Earth science is backward compared to yours, but we aren't filled to the eyes with crazy superstitions like you seem to be. Look. I'm not Hercules. I'm not anybody but Pedro. Pedro

Sebastian Arturo Jones."

Angrily he stooped down and picked Xandra up. He put his arms around her and tried to kiss her. She hung her head, trying to avoid his lips. Her own trembled against his. They did not respond.

He released her. She dropped to the floor again, prostrating herself at his feet.

"Nuts," Pedro gritted. He strode around the table, glaring at the hunched backs of the prostrate men. The glare softened as his eyes rested on Xandra's pretty shoulders, then returned with full force.

"Get up!" he shouted. "Get up and stop this nonsense!"

"The Lord Hercules has commanded," Xanti murmured. They all rose slowly, but kept their faces down.

"We are your slaves to command," Xanti said in a low voice. "We now know the truth. You have come from your pilgrimage to rescue the daughter of him whom you rescued long ago. You have come to rescue her and claim her for your bride. Command us and we do your bidding."

"Look," Pedro said. "It just isn't so. Can't you grasp that? It just isn't so. Snap out of it."

TWO DAYS later Pedro had resigned himself to the fact that the one thing they would not do was snap out of it. They were convinced he was Hercules Returned. They were so convinced of it that in the privacy of his own thoughts he began to wonder if it might not be so; but always when he wondered about it he winded up by snorting at himself with disgust.

And gradually he began to realize that he was behind the eight ball. These people of the snow white hair, these people who could snuff out a full size planet in three seconds, go from one place to another instantly

by teleportation, reach into the brain and twist it so he could talk their language while thinking in his own—they had suspended all their plans for rescuing Lualanra and were patiently waiting for orders from him, convinced that he and he alone would rescue their goddess.

The rhodoteracts had arrived with the black egg containing Zelbub. Their polyhedric formation circled the planet far out, waiting for his commands as did all the people.

He had been given a large, elaborately furnished room to live in. Xandra was his shadow—but a bent shadow of hidden sadness and sweet self sacrifice.

She would kiss him passionately—if he commanded it. She was convinced that she was too lowly and unworthy of him, that only a goddess such as Lualanra was worthy of him—and nothing he could say or do would give her any other belief.

In desperation he had called a meeting of the rulers of the planet and ordered that what he said be broadcast by television to the populace. At that meeting he had again insisted he wasn't Hercules.

"You laugh at the science of my race," he had shouted. "Well, I laugh at your decadent superstitions. I'm surprised that a race so enlightened and so advanced as this could have such things. You expect me to rescue Lualanra. You think that when I do I will marry her. I don't have the faintest idea how to rescue her. And when she is rescued I wouldn't marry her on a bet. I love Xandra. She's the one I want to marry."

And the people answered, "Yes, Lord Hercules." Then they went back to waiting for him to command—and to silently worshipping him at a distance.

He began to wonder what would happen when the truth finally forced

itself upon them—when, after days and months had gone without him rescuing Lualanra, they finally were forced to believe him. The full force of their wrath would be turned against him then, he was sure.

Finally in desperation he decided to more or less take charge and get things going.

"Maybe," he thought. "I might stumble onto something—some plan that will succeed."

He called another meeting of officials.

The newscasts didn't make him feel any better about it. As soon as he ordered a meeting they flashed specials all over the planet that the Lord Hercules had announced it was time to make plans and to act. One enterprising Walter Winchel predicted that within forty-eight hours Lualanra would once more be in her palace.

And at the time he had set for the meeting he was covered by television cameras every step of the way, and literally thousands of the populace lined the way, on their hands and knees with their heads down.

Xandra walked by his side because he ordered it. When he wasn't looking she would drop back a pace and walk in a half crouch, her head bent in worship of him.

It was during that walk from his room along the streets to the building where the meeting was to be held that a new mood took possession of him.

"I shouldn't be angry with these people," he thought, staring with brooding eyes at the sea of prostrate backs lining both sides of the street. "In spite of their science they are a simple, backward people. They are putting their faith in me. I—I hope I can do something so they won't be disappointed."

SO IT WAS with quiet determination to find some plan to work on that he strode into the meeting hall and took his place on the platform.

He looked over the prostrate forms of the leaders of the planet, then ordered them to rise and behave normally.

"I want all the microphones and television cameras shut off," he ordered.

There was hurried whispers and movement, then a man came to the foot of the platform.

"It is done, oh Lord Hercules," he said.

But Pedro had heard a reporter whispering into his mike. "The Lord Hercules is going to unfold his plans in secrecy," the busybody had said excitedly. "There are grave issues in the making. The meaning for this secrecy is obvious—as was the Lord's campaign of pretense that he was an ordinary man. It must be that Zelbub has discovered new powers that operate through the neutrinium film, and that Lord Hercules is aware of these things."

Pedro spread his arms in surrender at hearing this and looked heavenward with a "What can you do with guys like these" attitude.

"Now," he said. "I'm going to ask questions. I want the answers in plain words. I'm going to make suggestions. I want you to tell me exactly why my suggestions won't work. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Lord Hercules," a hundred voices answered in unison. There was a rustle of movement. Ten men came forward to the foot of the platform. Pedro guessed these were scientists coming up to answer what questions he might ask.

"The way I understand it," Pedro said after things quieted down. "Is that Zelbub kidnapped Lualanra and

hid her someplace for some reason. What was the reason?"

"Know you not the reason?" a voice asked wonderingly.

"Never mind what I know and don't know," Pedro said. "Just answer my questions."

"It is because Lualanra created human life on a planet that Zelbub had stolen long ago to create serpent life on," one of the ten men answered. "She found it and created human life. The created humans wiped out Zelbub's serpent creations. In anger he kidnapped her and enchained her forever, so she could never do it again."

"That's better," Pedro said. "It's a lot of nonsense, but at least listening to your nonsense is better than doing nothing. Now, another question. You have Zelbub trapped in that neutrinium egg. Why don't you crack it open and get to him? Surely you can open that last shell, can't you?"

"But surely you know —"

"Never mind what I know," Pedro shot out. "Just answer the question."

"It is because Zelbub is incarnated in a body of heavy elements," another voice spoke. "The neutrinium shell is a screen against the universal cosmic energy which transforms such elements into exploding centers of matter-energy. Thousands of miles of thickness of ordinary matter act as a screen for these cosmic energies in the same way. But we stripped those thousands of miles of thickness of ordinary matter away from him, leaving only the neutrinium shell. If we were to crack that Zelbub would explode with the energy of a sun—and destroy everything within a radius of billions of miles."

"Then why don't you do that?" Pedro asked. "Why don't you do that and destroy him?"

"That wouldn't destroy him," another of the ten answered. "His

Psyche matrix would merely be freed to find another mold. It would merely inconvenience him temporarily—and leave us with the task of finding him again."

"Then you really have him imprisoned?" I asked. "By stripping away the planet that protected him you made it impossible for him to leave the neutrinium shell without blowing up like an atom bomb?"

"That is true, oh Lord Hercules," several voices said.

"Well then," Pedro said. "Why don't you offer to build another planet around him if he will tell you where Lualanra is hidden?"

For the first time in two days Pedro saw people who weren't looking at him worshipfully. There was shocked surprise in their eyes.

"That is IT," one of them shouted. Someone started to cheer. The cheer was taken up by others until everyone was yelling happily.

In spite of himself Pedro strode through the cheering throng back to his quarters with a slight swagger.

HIS FEELING that he had accomplished something did not last long. Before many hours had passed he discovered that the scientists had assumed a lot of things. Most important of these assumptions had been that his casual mention of talking to Zelbub had meant he knew a way to do it.

The neutrinium egg, he was told later in the day, was impervious to all forms of radiation. It was, in effect, a shell shaped atomic nucleus, composed of neutrinos and positrons in close contact. Less than a millionth of one percent of any type of energy could get through it.

Two more days passed, but their hours were filled with study and figuring by Pedro. He called in technicians and had them explain the

workings of things—common here, but unknown to Earth science.

He finally settled on a plan involving the tractor beams of the rhodonteracts that held the neutrini-um egg. He thought it might work. He called in the technicians again.

"Look at this," he said, showing him his diagrams. "Why can't we incorporate an audio-amplification circuit in the control circuit of the tractor beam generator, feeding the microphone current through a series of audio transformers that will throw it out of phase the proper amount for each tractor beam so that the audio-variations of the tractors against the neutrini-um shell work together and vibrate it? The vibrations will set up similar vibrations on the inner side of the shell and create sound that Zelbub can hear."

They thought it would work.

"Also," Pedro went on. "We must have some device for registering vibrations in that shell so that we can hear what Zelbub says in reply."

It turned out they already had such a device. It was a radar interferometer setup. A tight radar beam was bounced against the neutrini-um shell at an angle of a fraction of a degree off the tangent plane, (any wave striking the shell at a greater angle being destroyed completely), and picked up and combined with another beam of the same frequency. The two then interfered with each other, the interference varying as a function of the reflection angle, which varied slightly with any vibration of the neutrini-um shell. It could be adjusted so as to be very critical, picking up the least vibration.

Pedro began to feel more like himself. He teleported from one rhodonteract to another, watching the work of changing over the control circuits of the tractor beams. He got acquainted with the men working on

them.

He even thought they had a sense of humor for a while until he finally figured out that they didn't get the point to any of his jokes, and merely laughed because he had expected them to.

That bit of disillusionment caused him to study the men more closely. It became obvious that they still considered him a god. His errors were whims to them. His questions were his way of testing their knowledge. His insistence that he was not a god was taken by them the same way a girl wants a boy to take her "Don't you dare kiss me." It made them increase the fervor of their worship. And so he gave up trying to change them.

In many ways it was laughable. In the privacy of his bedroom one morning he stood in front of his mirror and laid his right hand on his chest and struck a Napoleonic pose, then laughed uproariously.

Except for its serious aspect it was a picnic. All except Xandra's attitude. He kept working on her, but to no avail. She was willing to be his, body and soul—but always with the air of a saint before her god. Her temper, her humor, her extrovertive hunger for admiration, were replaced by humility, willing surrender, calmness in the conviction that when Lualanra was freed she would be cast aside.

In a fit of exasperation with her he even turned her over his knee and spanked her. She cried and then dropped to his feet and worshipped him all the more.

"Stop it!" he had shouted at her, then had stormed out. But she, and all others, took his fits of temper as being the expressions of a god. Whatever he did was godlike to them.

FINALLY the last wire was soldered in place, the last test of the

circuits made. A single small microphone attached to a slender cord held the power to vary the billions of horsepower in the tractor beams by millions of horsepower instantly in response to the faintest whisper impinging on the mike crystal.

Fluctuations greater in intensity than world shaking earthquakes would play on the neutrinium shell and cause it to vibrate a reproduction of the sounds picked up by the small button of a microphone that could be held in the palm of the hand.

Pedro stood at the observation windows of one of the rhodinteract ships looking across the thousands of miles that separated him from the neutrinium egg.

A hundred miles across its greater diameter, it seemed more a flat void of light than an object. No light reflected from it to give it shape and depth. The bright tractor beams ended sharply against it without reflection.

The visibility of the tractors, Pedro had learned, was caused by their effect on the millions of meson particles with which empty space is filled.

He studied the egg shaped thing and wondered what sort of creature was inside it. Human? Hardly, if its body were made of matter thousands of times denser than that of the human body. Certainly not, if it did not want human life created on planets, but rather serpent forms such as the prehistoric giant lizard life of the Earth's early history.

Was it perhaps a giant lizard itself? Immortal, and with the knowledge to create and shape life to its whims? If gods created in their own image it was certainly of the serpent family!

Pedro found himself trembling. All these people trusted his powers so much—and he had no powers. They were convinced he was a god—and he

knew they were wrong. He was no god.

Zelbub would know he was no god. And Zelbub might find some way to twist him around his thumb, playing on the people's superstitions.

Pedro gripped the microphone in sweating fingers. His thumb hesitated over the contact pin built into its frame that would make the contact that would send his voice crashing against the neutrinium film.

A few feet away was the loud speaker connected with the radar interferometer setup to bring Zelbub's answer to him. Around him were high officials and officers, and also television cameras and mikes to broadcast everything that transpired. No doubt several billion people were waiting for him to press the pin and start talking.

Xandra stood close by. Her hands gripped one another until her knuckles were white from the strain. She flashed him a look that made his heart jump—but it was a look that a girl gives her loved one when he sets foot on the gangplank of a ship that will take him away.

Pedro bit his lip to destroy the urge rising in him to dash the microphone to the floor and refuse to do anything more to find Lualanra. He was beginning to think he would dislike that goddess very much if and when he found her.

Abruptly he pressed the pin with his thumb and spoke into the mike.

"ZELBUB," he said. "We've got a hookup rigged up to talk with you. All you have to do is talk loudly and we can pick up the vibrations on your neutrinium shell. Can you hear me?"

"Perfectly," the answer came. "Who are you, who are so wise as to figure such a thing out?"

"My name is Pedro Sebastian Artu-

ro Jones," Pedro answered. "I'm from the Earth."

"Ah," Zelbub's voice came, soft, purring. "The Earth. One of my failures. Prometheus, rot him, spoiled that world for me in its prime."

"No doubt," Pedro said impatiently. "But that's neither here nor there. I have a proposition to make to you."

"Let's hear it," Zelbub said dryly, then added, "Although I know I'm not going to like it."

"These people stripped your outer defenses," Pedro said. "You now have just one thin neutrinium shell between you and destruction. My offer is, tell us where Lualanra is hidden and we will build a world around you again. Otherwise we will crack your shell and blow you up."

Pedro tried to make his voice sound confident. He barely succeeded. He was finding himself favorably impressed by the suave tones of Zelbub's voice. And that voice was about the last straw to turn the whole thing into an unbelievable farce. It couldn't be the voice of some evil, alien being. It had to be the voice of a friendly, human creature. There was something almost familiar to it—as if he had heard its tones before.

"I know you now," Zelbub said, ignoring the proposition. "You're Hercules. It was you who freed Prometheus."

"Nuts," Pedro said. "Now you're trying to play on the superstitions of these people. Well, don't try it. I've got that move all figured out."

But in his mind was a growing doubt. First a whole planet of people had been convinced he was Hercules. Now a strange, dangerous being who had never seen him was trying to tell him the same thing. Could it be true? Of course not! If there were any truth in it, wouldn't he have some knowledge of it himself? Wouldn't there be at least a faint memory of

being Hercules?

"As you say," Zelbub replied. "About your proposition, Hercules—I mean Pedro Sebastian Arturo Jones. I have one of my own. If my shell is cracked I will of course be blown up. But my psyche matrix will then be freed. I wonder if you can guess the vehicle that will house it?"

Pedro frowned at the loudspeaker.

"That vehicle," Zelbub went on. "Will be Lualanra herself. Now do you think my shell will be cracked?"

Pedro looked around at the faces of the listeners and read the answer. It was defeat. He had known it would be. He was not a god. How could he match wits with something that was immortal?

Suddenly an idea came to him. He heard himself chuckling in amusement over it.

"Why do you laugh?" Zelbub asked, a trace of irritation in his voice.

"I was just thinking," Pedro said. "I am housed in the body of one of these people. I find his appetites growing on me, his ideas of beauty, his beliefs and philosophy. I affect them a little, but they affect me more each day. Could you perhaps bring Lualanra's eyes to light up in delight at the creation of creatures such as you love? Or would you find your creations turning into humans in spite of you? I've a good notion to give the orders to crack your egg and find out!"

SUDDENLY there was laughter—feminine laughter. It was like—like that he had heard back on Earth. He looked around. From the expressions on their faces he knew none of the others had heard it. Was it Lualanra?

"So you are Pedro Sebastian Arturo Jones," Zelbub said after a long silence. Then he laughed, a low, bitter laugh. "Give me a little time yet

to consider your proposition—Pedro."

* * *

"Look, Xandra," Pedro said. "If I was Hercules don't you think I would know it?"

He was in his room, standing on a rug whose mat was a lawn of white silk fibers finer in texture than the softest hair. Xandra, brought to him by guards at his command, had immediately dropped to the floor and hidden her face. Her scarlet robe and snowy tresses were all Pedro could see of her.

"Yes, Lord Hercules," she said.

"Well," Pedro said. "I know that I'm not."

"As you say, Lord Hercules," Xandra said.

"As I say. As I say," Pedro groaned. "Is that all you can say? Do you dare to call me a liar?"

"Oh, no, Lord Hercules," Xandra said contritely.

"To call me Hercules is to call me a liar," Pedro said. "I say I'm just Pedro. For you to even believe anything else is for you to believe me a liar. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Lor—Pedro," Xandra said.

"That's better," Pedro growled. "Now. Do you believe I'm Pedro, and not Hercules?"

"Yes—Pedro," Xandra said.

"Very well, then, Xandra," Pedro said. "Prove it. Get up on your feet and be to me what you were the first time I met you. Be yourself. I would rather have you slap my face when I kiss you than give in like you were a slave."

Slowly Xandra rose to her feet. She stepped back a pace, a smile on her lips. She half turned away from him, arching her head coyly, and slipped off her scarlet robe, revealing a transparent, filmy gown of pale blue, through which her lithe body appeared to be more ethereal than material.

Suddenly she ran to Pedro and slapped his face, then turned and ran away across the rug. She stopped ten feet away and turned to face him. She was poised, gracefully alert, a playful smile on her lips.

Pedro ran after her, caught her, and pressed her struggling body into his arms. She turned her head this way and that, avoiding his kisses, but laughing teasingly. She leaned back, pushing away from him, her firm breasts heaving with panting breath.

But her eyes—

Pedro let her go suddenly with revulsion. She fell to the rug. He looked down at her, his thoughts bitter.

She lay there, sobbing, her shoulders, naked through the shimmering blue transparency of her gown, shaking with emotions Pedro could not fathom.

"I don't understand you," Pedro said slowly. "You love me don't you."

"Oh, yes, Lord Hercules," Xandra said through her sobs.

"I'm not Lord Hercules!" Pedro shouted. Then, softer: "You know I love you, don't you?"

There was no answer. Pedro glared at Xandra's shoulders for a long minute, then turned away.

HE WALKED about the room kicking things in his way and cursing. The curses came out in English and Spanish and sounded good to him. Finally his exasperation subsided. He came back and stood over Xandra. His eyes softened.

"The trouble with you, Xandra," he said. "Is that you're buffaloeed by Lualanra. You think because she's a goddess that she's something special. All of your people think that. The truth of the matter is that she's

no better than anyone else—and maybe no worse. Certainly she's no better than you are. What has she got that you haven't? Is she more beautiful? She couldn't be! It's just like with Zelbub. Your people built him up so big I was beginning to think he WAS something—until I heard him speak. Then I realized that whatever his shape or age or powers, he was just a guy. He might be a mean guy, a tough guy, a bully, a killer—but whatever he is he's just a guy. He can make mistakes, get mad, fall for a line, scheme, fume, stall for time, and all the other things that 'just guys' do.

"That's one thing we people of the Earth have learned. Kings and gods and presidents and great men are still just guys. They have their weaknesses and strengths just like anybody else. Some of them are as crazy as any common nut. I would be too if I fell for all the propaganda that makes me out as being a god by the name of Hercules.

"I'm going to prove it to you. I'm going to find and free Lualanra. I'm going to make a monkey out of the big bad lizard boy, Zelbub. Then—if you still won't believe I love only you, by all that's Holy I'll spit in Lualanra's eye and paddle her—I'll convince everybody that being an immortal old lady with a forever young body doesn't make any woman better than the one I love."

He leaned over and lifted Xandra by her shoulders. He tilted her face up and kissed her tear dampened eyes. Then he pushed her away.

"Go back to your home and sit in a corner and feel sorry for yourself," he said. "I'm going to be busy."

He picked up her scarlet robe and put it over her shoulders, then watched her as she walked slowly out of the room, her head bent.

Then he strode over to the vido-

phone and called Xantl.

"I WAS GOING to call you," Xantl said. "But I was informed that it was your will to be alone with Xandra."

"What's up?" Pedro asked.

"Zelbub announced that he is ready to talk to you," Xantl said.

"Well, I want to talk to him, too," Pedro said. "The sooner the better."

A few minutes later Pedro was on the rhodonteract. Xantl and several other officials arrived at the same time. Reporters were arriving by teleportation with their television cameras. Word was being flashed around the planet below that another great moment had come. The Lord Hercules was going to receive the answer of Zelbub.

"So much the better," Pedro thought with a sneer. "They're going to have their eyes opened. I'm going to debunk a lot of their beliefs. They're going to get the surprise of their lives!"

Pedro looked around to make sure the television cameras were all trained on him, the mikes connected to radio broadcast stations all pointed his way. Then his thumb went down on the pin that connected his mike to the tractor beam control circuit.

"Hello, Zelbub," he said. "I hear you're ready to talk to me."

"Yes, oh mighty Hertules," Zelbub said mockingly. "But only to say goodbye. In a few moments I will make adjustments in my neutrinium shell that will take advantage of the Cosmic energies and enable me to escape the clutches of the tractor beams. Once free of them I can bore into the heart of any planet I choose."

"Very smart," Pedro said. "But it just goes to prove something."

"What's that?" Zelbub asked,

sounding worried.

"Oh, nothing," Pedro said airily. "Go ahead and escape. Maybe you'll figure it out after awhile."

He chuckled.

"As a matter of fact," he added. "I was just about to order the tractors shut off. I'll do that now. Then you won't have to break loose from them. You can just skip on to some planet and dig a hole. Maybe you'll figure things out eventually."

"So you've learned where Lualanra is!" Zelbub exclaimed.

"Oh, no," Pedro said.

"Oh yes," Zelbub gritted. "I see through you now. You're stalling me. You want me to escape. They'll give you time to get to her and free her."

"Don't be silly," Pedro said. "Shut up and listen to me for a minute."

Xandra appeared suddenly on the teleportation stage. Pedro grinned at her. She bowed her head and shoulders. Her eyes were red from crying. Pedro's grin faded. He turned his attention back to the microphone.

At the same instant a titanic force shot through the ship.

"Zelbub's broken free!" someone shouted.

"Good!" Pedro said. "Follow him. He'll lead you to Lualanra."

THE BLACK ovoid was indeed free. The ship formation of rhodonteracts were shooting into space, driven by the tractors of those ships opposite each other. It took seconds for human hands to shut off the titanic force beams.

Meanwhile the neutrinium egg was speeding farther and farther away. Reflecting no light itself, it still was visible because of the stars it occulted in its flight.

"After him," Pedro shouted. "The fool will lead us straight to Lualanra."

The stars were moving now, and

changing from white into the blue.

"Put your tractors on him," Pedro said hurriedly. "In a minute the stars will vanish and you won't be able to follow him unless you're hooked onto him."

The tractors shot out. They made contact and held. Slowly the black ovoid drew closer. The force of the tractors was enabling them to gain on it.

The stars crept into the violet, vanished, and there was nothing visible but the tractor beam which ended abruptly a thousand miles away.

"What'll happen if he suddenly stops?" Pedro asked Xantl worriedly.

"Our tractors are equipped with overload relays connected to the parastasis circuit," Xantl explained. "If he stops we stop. There's no danger there."

"Does he know we're on his tail?" Pedro asked.

"I doubt it," Xantl said. "We understand what he's done. He's altered the neutrinium shell in a way that makes it work the same way a part of an exploding atom works, or a meson when it behaves as a cosmic ray particle. We do much the same thing with our parastasis equipment. Even our tractor beams are produced by such alterations in a neutrinium paraboloid. They use no energy of our own generation, but rather direct the cosmic energy that pervades all space."

"I see," Pedro said. "I wonder how long it will take for us to get where we're going? It may be light years away."

"No matter how far," Xantl explained. "It will not take long. You see, to the stationary observer light takes time to travel. But time is also a function of the speed. As we approach the speed of light time changes. We ourselves become light waves

to anything stationary in space or moving slowly. And, as light waves, our time comes to a stop. In a matter of minutes we can cross light years of space. Not really, you understand though, because just as time comes to a standstill at the speed of light, so space itself—distance—does much the same thing. A million miles is a million miles, but light doesn't cross the space of a million miles. It just—"

"I know. I know," Pedro said. "It just SEEMS to travel through space."

"That's right," Xantl said.

Pedro looked around until he found Xandra. He went to her and put his arm around her shoulder.

"Look, Xandra," he said in a low voice that only she could hear. "Pretty soon now we'll be rescuing Lualanra. Whether you think so or not, I love you. All I want is to get Lualanra rescued and then find a nice quiet spot where we can be alone and live our life together without interference—and especially without all this superstition everybody's been feeding me. Don't do anything rash. Understand? No self sacrifice for the goddess you love, or any other such rot. Promise?"

Her eyes were two violet stars as she nodded wordlessly. Pedro smiled at her, then kissed her tenderly.

When he looked up one of the officers of the ship was talking earnestly to Xantl. Xantl motioned him over. Pedro went, wondering what was happening.

"Zelbub," Xantl said gravely. "He's collecting parastatic energy. That can mean only one thing—he's planning to throw a neutrinium shield around the space containing both him and us. Then he can break his own shield and attack us without danger of his exploding in the process."

How big a shield can he throw up?" Pedro asked.

"At the rate he's collecting it he will be able to create one a million miles across," Xantl said gravely.

"What can we do to stop him?" Pedro asked.

"Nothing," Xantl said bitterly. "Except meet him in battle when it happens. And nothing we have can touch him on his own battleground. Within the neutrinium shield we won't be able to draw on cosmic energies. They will be blocked by the shield. Our weapons will be useless."

"We'll see," Pedro said grimly.

He looked out through the observation windows at the distant, sharp termination of the tractor beam that was the only visible means of locating Zelbub's egg of neutrinium. There was no change that he could see, but he knew that instruments other than the eyes were trained on that spot, measuring such things as inertia and other things he knew nothing of. It was by those instruments that these people knew what was going on.

SUDDENLY there was a screaming sound followed by sharp cracks. The bulk of a huge planet appeared ahead as if it were being materialized on a teleportation platform. At the same time the blanket of stars appeared again. Zelbub's egg was outlined by them.

In seconds the planet was just below. Something else appeared. It was a small satellite. It was no more than a mile in diameter, roughly round, pitted and marred.

But it was not the small satellite that attracted Pedro's gaze. It was Lualanra. There was no mistaking her!

The rhodoneract's crew had immediately attached the tractors to

the satellite. The ship was following along in the wake of the hurtling miniature world and drawing rapidly closer for a quick landing.

Zelbub was forgotten in the excitement. And Lualanra was close enough now to be seen clearly.

She was beautiful beyond anything he had ever seen, Pedro thought. But it was more than human beauty. Her body, clothed only in filmy wisps, shone with a radiance of ethereal god-force that was a magnetism drawing him toward her irresistibly.

Guiltily, he glanced around to look at Xandra. With a sickening sensation he saw that now Xandra seemed plain and common. He understood suddenly everything he hadn't understood before. Xyrrhmax's lack of enthusiasm in his love of Xandra. Xandra's refusal to believe he would still love her after the rescue of Lualanra.

He cursed and turned back to the view of Lualanra. She was held by heavy black chains.

"Quick!" Pedro shouted. "Land and cut her loose before Zelbub can get to her!"

His words were unnecessary. Pedro watched the desperate haste and grim faces of the men around him and realized that Lualanra's attraction was not for him alone. There was not a one of these men that would not die for her at the drop of a hat.

His eyes went back to Lualanra as if drawn by a magnet. But now the ship had landed. Lualanra was smiling and waving a greeting as though her chains were non-existent.

"Space suit?" Pedro asked, gripping Xantl's shirt front to command his attention.

"None needed," Xantl said quickly. "Heavy matter core with neutrinium shield. Normal gravity and airpres-

sure."

Pedro waited for no more. He ran toward the spacelocks. But it was like trying to crowd into a bargain basement during a give-away sale. Even Xantl brushed past him and merged into the mass of squirming manhood that was trying to get every component of itself through the space-locks before every other component.

Pedro stepped back and scratched his head. As he watched, something gave way and the mass surged out of the ship. All except two crushed bodies of men who had stumbled and been trampled to death. The exit was clear.

About to leap forward, Pedro felt a tug on his sleeve. He looked around. It was Xandra.

"Take this, my Lord Hercules," she said, pressing something into his hand.

He looked down at it. It was exactly like an ordinary pistol, but of the utterly black neutrinium substance.

"Thanks, Xandra," he said gruffly. "Remember your promise."

"Oh, yes, my lord," Xandra said breathlessly.

IN THE SKY Zelbub's obsidian egg outlined by the star blanket seemed an occulted, fiery sun. Pedro looked up at it as he ran toward the crowd around Lualanra, and as he looked the sky was instantly blotted out. At the same time he felt a strange sluggishness steal through him. He continued to run toward Lualanra, but his movements were like those of an underwater walker.

A new ship was coming down. It landed swiftly. From its exit port a figure emerged. It was a giant shaped in the effigy of a man, with shining silver-blue scales covering his skin. An aura of pulsing radiance

surrounded him, outlined him, revealed him in the utter gloom. It was Zelbub.

He was running on half saurian half human legs, his feet sinking into the granite terrain as if it were sand. He reached Lualanra, scattering the milling humans out of his path.

Pedro dropped to one knee to get steadier aim with the neutrinium gun. His finger whitened on the trigger as Zelbub reached toward Lualanra. Then it relaxed. A tense grin flicked over his face.

Zelbub was taking off the chains that bound the goddess. So much the better. And Zelbub was not aware of him and his gun.

But Lualanra was aware of him. She was flashing him a smile to tell him she understood his strategy. And as the last chain came free she leaped clear.

At the same instant Pedro fired, aiming at the back of the head. The huge monster jerked, stumbled, then turned in his direction. There was a bewildered, hurt look in the large, unwinking eyes as they came to rest on him.

Pedro walked forward, the pistol ready for instant use. Zelbub was shaking his head, as if by doing so he could wipe away the fatal bullet of neutrinium in his brain.

"You should have listened to me, Zelbub," Pedro said. "You shouldn't have gone off half cocked. If you had listened this wouldn't have happened. I was going to tell you that the two of us together could make Lualanra leave your creations alone. You have as much right to create in your own image as she does. I don't believe in this racial superiority stuff. You should have waited and listened to me."

"Sorry," Zelbub said softly, faintly. In that moment of death his almost human, steel-blue, delicately

scaled features were truly god-like in their majesty. He looked down at Pedro. A crooked smile distorted his features. "I didn't know—Pedro." Then he crashed forward, his heavy-matter body half burying itself in the solid rock.

Cursing softly to himself in Spanish, Pedro turned away from the dead Zelbub. About him were the sprawled bodies of dead humans and the prostrate bodies of living men worshipping their goddess.

Lualanra, the golden radiance of her aura cloaking her young body, was coming toward him. Her perfect beauty of features portrayed the innocent bloom of teen-age girlhood and the wisdom of the gods. Her eyes were deep pools of blue heaven with filmy white clouds scudding in a springtime breeze. Her lips were red coral, her nose delicately architected by masters of sculpture. Her hair was the dancing flight of angels illumined by the radiance of God.

THE VISION crept into Pedro's heart and soul, settling into the fibers of his being. The pistol fell from his fingers unheeded. He was advancing to meet her, his arms outstretched.

Then suddenly he stopped, a bitter smile, amused, deriding, on his lips. Lualanra paused, startled.

"What is it, my Hercules?" she asked, her voice sweet and rich as the music of Heavenly choirs.

"I was just trying to picture you with an apron on, bent over a cookstove, getting my supper," Pedro said, grinning. "With a couple of kids pulling on your skirt." His grin broadened at the shocked look on her face. "I can picture Xandra that way, but not you," he added.

Lualanra came the remaining few steps slowly, her eyes looking in-

tently into his. There was a strange regret in the depths of her infinitely wise eyes, a growing sadness hovering on her lips.

"So be it," she said suddenly, her voice catching on a sob. Her head shot up, proudly. She lifted her arms heavenward, and from the infinite depths of space god-energies seemed to gather about her. "So be it!" she said. And her voice was the voice of thunder.

"So be it!" she said again, and lightnings streamed from her naked arms, flashing upward and splitting the neutrinium darkness above, rolling it back, revealing the stars of heaven.

Instantly the cosmos burst into a flaming maelstrom of fiery blasts that picked him up and tossed him wildly into space. He landed with a shattering, painful thud.

But as he landed his thoughts turned to Xandra, alarmed. He staggered to his feet. He ran, stumbling. The ground was slippery. Something cool and wet was pelting at his face.

Water? But it couldn't be. He blinked his eyes and shook his head violently.

Lightnings crashed across the dark heavens. They revealed a car overturned in the ditch. He stumbled toward it. He reached it.

Lightning crashed through the skies again, revealing a white face through the rain pattered window. It was Xandra!

With frenzied joy Pedro ripped open the inverted car door and wrapped his arms around the unconscious girl. He pulled her free, gained the road, and turned back toward his own car. It was a mass of flames. As he looked the gas tank exploded, sending sheets of flame outward into the driving storm.

He looked down at the smooth white face against his shoulder.

"It's Xandra, all right," he said, marveling. "Whatever her name, whoever she thinks she is, it's Xandra, my only love."

He started walking down the highway, his shoes squishing in the wet puddles, his clothes clinging to him. His eyes stayed on the unconscious face of the girl in his arms.

She stirred weakly. Her eyes opened and looked up at him. They blinked at him. Then her lips smiled weakly.

"What is your name?" Pedro asked in a hoarse whisper.

"My name?" she echoed. "Why, my name's Sandra."

"Sandra!" Pedro said wonderingly. He looked up. Suddenly there was a clear spot in the sky. In it winked a thousand stars. And suddenly one of them flashed into a dot of brilliance greater than any of the others, fading instantly into blackness.

And, faintly, carrying with it a note of sadness, came a peal of laughter, feminine, lonely. Fading into the distance. But there was another voice—feminine, speaking.

"Huh?" Pedro grunted.

"I said, what's yours?"

Pedro looked down at the white face resting in his shoulder. It was smiling at him.

"Oh," he said, suddenly comprehending. "Mine is Pedro. Pedro Sebastian Arturo Jones. I work at the atom plant station down the road."

Sandra seemed to study the name for a moment.

"Pedro Jones," she whispered drowsily. Then, sighing contentedly, she closed her eyes and nestled her head more closely against his shoulder.

And Pedro strode through the storm, the lightnings and thunder playing overhead, the rain beating against the pavement.

THE END

MAYBE IT'S TRUE



By GILBERT MEAD



ONCE UPON a time....

All good fairy stories start that way. So do ancient folk tales and haunting legends, hoary lore born of some dim old fact, embroidered through uncounted generations with all the imagery and fancy skilled storytellers bring to their art. Fact and fancy become as one, so that we who hear the tales can only listen and smile, and dream a little, maybe, then shrug the stories aside and forget they were told.

Once upon a time a beautiful island stood high above the blue reach of the western ocean. A great land it was, the legend says, bigger than Asia Minor and Libya, lying just beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Its people were many and wise and strong. Their armies overran the Mediterranean basin, and only Athens resisted their onslaught. Then the island's days of glory died. The land itself disappeared under the sea, and nothing remained to tell it had ever been—nothing but an ancient tale.

Plato told the story in his *Critias*. He fashioned a history for the lost land and gave it a name. Atlantis he called it, and we still use that name for the ocean in which the island floated, into which it disappeared.

The legend of a land lost in the western sea was not confined to Greece. It was not merely a fanciful tale invented by Plato and imitated by men who followed. The story has lived independently of Plato and gained credence in the folklore of Wales and Portugal, of England and Scandinavia, of barbaric islanders off the coast of Scotland.

Could it have been mere myth? The Portuguese had their Antilia, Island of the Seven Cities, somewhere between Lisbon and Cipangu, Japan. The eminent geographer Martin Behaim wrote in 1492 that Antilia had been colonized 760 years before by Christian refugees from the Moorish invasion of Iberia.

The tribes of the Welsh mountains called the lost land Avalon. St. Brendan's Island was another name it bore. And some of the bold, brave deeds recorded in the King Arthur legend had been performed in Lyonesse, a country once not far off the Cornish coast. Florence of Worcester wrote in his *Chronicon e Chronicis*, about 1100 A.D., a full description of rich Lyonesse, without a suggestion of disbelief in its reality. Other English chroniclers repeated the story in obvious good faith.

An Island of Brazil was long thought to lie somewhere in the wide Atlantic, and today a great republic bears that name. As

late as 1830, Purdy's *General Chart of the Atlantic* showed a "Brazil Rock (high)" in 51 degrees 10' N. and 15 degrees 50' W. There was also the lost Breton city of Is. There were Mayda, and Green Island, the latter common in folklore from Gibraltar's Rock to the outer Hebrides.

And every one of these strange tales had one common feature: Such a land had been, and it was no more. The waves of the Western ocean had rolled across it, and now it lay deep beneath the sea with all the countless ships the waves had swallowed.

Once upon a time....

THE TALE of Atlantis, of Is and Lyonesse and Avalon, may have had a solid basis in prehistoric fact. Sober science gives reason to think some part of all those old stories could have been true. Possibly that strange and beautiful island did exist. Possibly it was not engulfed by the sea. Possibly it merely floated away, beyond the limits of early man's narrow ken.

A German scientist who died some 20 years ago first made such speculation less than fantastic. In his *Origin of Continents and Oceans*, Alfred Wegener was not trying to explain Atlantis—but in that profound book he did lay a solid foundation for the thought that Atlantis might have been more than the child of an ancient tale teller's dream.

Wegener imagined the earth to consist of a rather thin outer shell composed chiefly of the lighter rocks, a much thicker inner layer of basic rock, and a large core of still heavier material. The continents, he thought, were once one—a huge land raft afloat on vast subseas of molten rock. One chunk broke away, and Africa was born. Another became Australia. A third became the two Americas, tenuously joined by a thin neck of land that would some day be wrenched apart.

Wegener's idea in today's theory of continental drift. The German scientist marshaled an impressive array of incontestable facts to bolster his view, but the learned men of his generation, conceding the facts, ignored his conclusions. Today, however, geologists do not scoff. Many of the best of them are ready to believe that Alfred Wegener knew what he was talking about. They are adding newly discovered facts to those put forward by Wegener—and finding that old facts and new all point the same way.

It's easy to prove that Africa is drifting away from Europe. The most ancient rec-

ords place the width of the Strait of Gibraltar at barely one half mile. Euton, in 400 B. C., said it was four miles, and one brief century later Gresnio called it five miles. Nineteen hundred years ago Livius reported that the strait was seven miles wide, and Victor Vitensa (400 A. D.) jumped that figure to 12 miles. Today it's 15 miles.

Wegener's theory has helped geologists explain a number of puzzling things. The Appalachian Mountains of the eastern United States, for example, and the Hercynian mountains of Britain and Brittany are identical in rock composition and geologic age. Both hold extensive and similar coal beds. Labrador's older rocks match those of Scotland. Distinctive rock formations on the west coast of Africa are duplicated along the eastern shores of South America. There has to be some reason for all this, and Wegener's idea of continental drift offers the one logical explanation.

The continents have always been continents. No one of them has ever been under deep water. Marine deposits known as ooze—formed from the bodies of microscopic deep-sea organisms and found at the ocean bottom wherever waters are really deep—have never been discovered in any land formation. Since none of today's continents has ever been deeply submerged, it is unlikely that Atlantis or Lyonesse (if, indeed, such a land ever existed) was swallowed up by the sea and never found. Man has sounded all the oceans.

BEFORE and during World War II, German scientists at work on the theory of continental drift calculated that South America is drifting westward at the rate of eight inches per year. North America's travel was figured at 12 inches per year. The two western continents are steadily changing their relative positions, and the isthmus between them is being slowly twisted into new shapes. Today, a ship passing from the Atlantic into the Pacific at this point has to sail south, not west.

Now let's play a cut-out puzzle game with the continents. Solemn scientists have done exactly that. Cut out maps of Europe, Africa, Greenland, Newfoundland, the British Isles, and the Americas. Lay them on a table and move them about with no regard for the places they occupy on a map. See for yourself how snugly South America's bulge hugs the African coast, how Georgia and Florida can be made to cuddle up to northwestern Africa. See how well Greenland will fit between Labrador and Norway, how Iceland and Newfoundland and Britain fill the larger gaps.

There are plenty of points at which today's continents and islands will not fit perfectly together—but for uncounted centuries the seas have been washing away the softer rocks of some shores, depositing matter on others. Rivers have built rich deltas at their mouths, and all the other forces of erosion and accretion have con-

spired to make comparatively minor changes in the outlines of every land mass.

Wegener was up against one problem which he could not solve with the knowledge then at his disposal. If the continents are actually floating on a liquid base, the gravitational pull of the earth's core and the counterpull of sun and moon should subject the land itself to tides like those of the oceans. For a long time, scientists had considered such land tides probable—but they had no tidal gauge that would measure this rise and fall, if it did exist. Then, a few short years ago, the gravitimeter was perfected—and science had an instrument sensitive enough to measure fluctuations in gravity of as little as one part in a thousand million. And a gravitimeter at the University of Texas has recorded daily movement of the solid earth in the Austin area amounting to as much as three inches!

Score another point for continental drift. Score one point for the ancient legend of a lost Atlantis. It might be that what prehistoric man saw was the two Americas slipping westward beyond his limited horizon. Possibly you and I live in Atlantis today!

One fact that seems to refute that suggestion is the slow rate of drift of the continents. At 12 inches per year, North America could have moved away from Europe only 1,000 miles in 5,200,000 years—and the human race is supposed to be not more than 2,000,000 years old.

But that objection presupposes a constant rate of drift, and we know from the records of the width of Gibraltar that the movement has not been at an unchanging rate. Africa and Europe drifted one mile further apart between 400 and 300 B.C. During the next 300 years the gap increased by two miles; the rate had decreased by one third. Between the beginning of the Christian era and 400 A.D. another five miles of water separated the two continents; the rate of drift was now one and a quarter times that recorded before 300 B.C.—almost twice the rate between 300 B.C. and the Year One of our era. And during the last 1500 years the movement has slowed to barely one fifth mile per century.

All this lends color to the possibility that the westward drift of the Americas was at one time much swifter than it is today. Quite possibly, then, it would not have taken millions of years to create a water gap of 3,000 miles between Europe and North America, of something over half that distance between South America and Africa. It is not unreasonable, then, to speculate that America—Atlantis—was within the scope of early man's ken.

But if this explanation of the Atlantis legend were the true one, what of that portion of the tale which says that Atlantean armies once overran the Mediterranean lands? Did such armies exist? And if they

did exist, did all these people vanish from the earth?

Well, whole peoples have lived and vanished, leaving little or no trace of their passing. And it could be that the tale of marauding armies was part of the storyteller's embroidery with which all ancient legends are encrusted. But more than one sober investigator has been unwilling to discard even the possibility of an Atlantean people.

FOR THOUSANDS of years before Columbus—how many thousands of years, no one knows—there existed in southern Mexico, and in the adjacent areas of Central America, a civilization as far advanced as that of ancient Egypt.

The Mayas were architects and engineers. Their temples often stood on truncated pyramids as skillfully built as those the Israelites worked on, under the slave driver's lash, beside the Nile. The Mayas were planters; they cultivated cotton and spun it into thread and wove it into cloth. They were artists, too, and fashioned ornaments of gold and precious stones.

The Mayas knew the stars and their courses. They had worked out a calendar, modern science has never been able to decipher, but in which some definitely phonetic characters have been identified. And these early Americans wrote their records in books, not on tablets of stone or clay. They made books with wooden covers and leaves of woven vegetable fibers.

The Mayas were skilled in paint and pottery and feather work. They kept bees and raised poultry and trapped game. Few examples of their handiwork remain, but those that do exist show the Mayas as a people far advanced in many arts. No other aboriginal group in all the Americas had progressed so far in knowledge, except possibly the long lost people of the Nazca region of Peru, whose amazing system of

astronomical observations and charts is only now coming to light. And the Nazca people antedated the Incas by many centuries.

The Incas, too, had many customs and skills which so closely resembled those of Egypt that reputable authorities have argued an Old World origin for them.

Maya tradition—folklore, this, like the tale of Atlantis—said that the Mayas the Spaniards found were a blend of two groups. One had come from the southwest, from Guatemala and Salvador, possibly (at some remote time) from the land of the Incas and of Nazca. *The other group had invaded Yucatan from the Gulf of Mexico!*

It is not impossible, then, that there was an Atlantis. It is not impossible that its armies (or its band of roving, looting warriors) did appear in the Mediterranean basin. It is not impossible that these were the distant, legendary ancestors of those Mayas whose descendants still people the Yucatan peninsula.

Alfred Wegener was not thinking of the Mayan civilization, nor of fascinating folk tales, when he formulated his careful theory of continental drift. Modern geologists, showing new interest in that German scientist's opinion, are not concerning themselves with these exciting speculations. But science has built convincing explanations of prehistoric life on scattered scraps of fact no more substantial than those presented here. The time could be near when science will assemble all this romantic, yet true, material and fashion a picture not unlike the picture we have been painting.

Once upon a time a beautiful island stood high above the blue reach of the western ocean. A great land it was. Its people were many and strong. Then the land vanished, and nothing remained to tell it had been—nothing remained but a tale that was cherished through thousands of years in the folklore of seafaring nations.

And maybe it's true. Just maybe.

THE END

Radioactive Railroad



By PETE BOGG

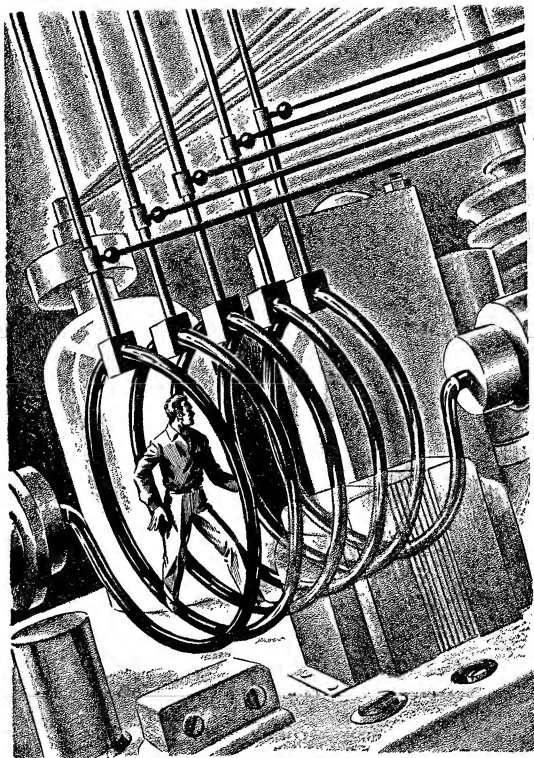


MODEL railroading has many enthusiasts who would rather play with an electric train than eat. But the little gadgets have at last been put to a very practical use. In a Cleveland hospital which is doing cancer research, the radioactive gas, radon, which comes in small capsules, is too "hot" to be handled by human hands.

To shuttle it between the storage room and the laboratory and therapy rooms, small electric trains, automatically controlled are used to carry the deadly dangerous gas. In this way it need only be handled with tongs at the end of its journey with

no danger to anyone.

The idea is worthy of extension elsewhere. There are many places particularly in labs where small amounts of deadly dangerous materials are handled. It doesn't take a genius to see that the simple reliable toy electric railroad provides an ideal way to transport that material within the confines of a building. Excellent mobility is assured because complicated switching routines are elementary to the practitioners of the railroading art. And we half suspect that the scientists will have a good time while they work their toy!



He seemed to be surrounded by a weird world of coils, machines and ghostly outlines.



BEYOND the MATRIX of TIME

By ROG PHILLIPS

What is Time? What has it to do with
immortality? Can it be that when we die,
we only discover that Time doesn't exist?

I GLANCED about the large table, a warm glow of friendship and love adding to the effects of the heady liquor. These were my friends and loved ones. Ned Brooke, whom I had known only briefly and casually while he still lived, but who had considered me his best friend, and had enticed me into that trip into the frigid wilds of the Endicott Range in northern Alaska where the mysterious bulk of the Sacred Mountain rears its snowless black head. Charlie, the Esquimoux, who had been my guide on that journey into the wastelands. He had been injured by some snow creature and I had had to amputate his leg. He had died and I had buried him in the snow, then built an igloo over his grave while I waited for death myself.

Abwalah the Hongwee sat at the

head of the table as the host. Allicas, also a Hongwee, sat at the foot of the table. Dead for thousands of years, they had once lived with the millions of their fellows in a flourishing civilization in what was to later become the United States.

Beside me sat my wife, Nanapochek, who, despite her name, is of white descent. She and I alone of the six of us were alive—and therefore existing in two worlds.

The occasion of the celebration was our first wedding anniversary. And as I glanced about I found it hard to believe that Nana and I had been married a whole year, and that I had been living in the World of the Matrix as well as the regular world for that long. It seemed only yesterday that Charlie and I had stepped out of the air car beside this very house at the

base of the Sacred Mountain to find Nana waiting to welcome us.

Even now, as I sat there beside Nana finishing the last delicious morsels of food prepared by Wong, the Chinese cook, who had died of starvation in China a couple of centuries previously, I found it hard to realize that the body I inhabited, so identical to the body I had grown up in, was nothing more than a semi-static pattern of electric potentials existing in a matrix of quartz and crystalline iron in the Sacred Mountain itself.

My real body, and that of Nana, reposed in peaceful slumber in our bed in our house in Evanston. Or were even they unreal? That question had haunted me for a year now. How could it be solved?

IN THE WORLD of the Matrix there was a Sacred Mountain identical in size and shape with that which existed in the world of my birth. To each world the other existed in a Matrix. The relationship was reciprocal in its appearance. Could it not, perhaps, be reciprocal in actuality, so that there might be no actual reality of time and space, but only related Matrices in some spaceless and timeless continuum?

What is space? It is supposed to be actual extent. Yet I had drawn a triangle and found its relationships to hold in both worlds. In one of those worlds that triangle was certainly not spatial. In the Sacred Mountain existed a world of millions of people, with a Moon two hundred thousand odd miles from the Earth—all in a bulk that filled no more than four cubic miles of the space of the other.

If distance is an illusion in one reality—an illusion so consistent that the finest of astronomical instruments can't detect a flaw—might not ALL distance be an illusion? And, if distance is not an illusion in some real-

ity, by what method can it be determined that in that reality distance is actual?

As we finished our food and sat back, relaxing, I voiced this problem. Then I proceeded to light my pipe while Abwalah, a twinkle of enjoyment in his eyes, discussed it.

"That's a very basic problem," he said. "It goes far deeper than you think, Craig. And it has occupied the minds of some of our greatest thinkers for thousands of years—without their having arrived at a definite conclusion. From the ideal standpoint it resolves into the problem of discovering some property that actual reality would have which no illusory reality could possibly possess—but how could such a property be discovered?"

"I've gone that far myself," I spoke up. "I've gone even farther in my thinking. Suppose that some theoretician finally solved the basic nature of reality and proved that actual reality could be only one thing—and neither world corresponded to that mathematician proving that five plus three really equaled nine, and all worlds in which it equaled eight were unreal. Then, hypothetically, there MIGHT BE NO REALITY AT ALL."

"Not necessarily," Abwalah answered. "We must always entertain the possibility that since we are ourselves nothing but illusions in illusions we might not be able to penetrate to reality. We might be able to discover its nature by pure reasoning, so that we know what it must be; but never be able to 'travel' to it.

"Let me explain what I mean by a hypothetical example. Suppose the world you were born in is just a matrix. You 'traveled' into this world by a transfer of the energy structure of your mind to the energy structure of the Matrix, and now you are 'here'.

Let's suppose there were another Sacred Mountain relating this world to still a third, into which you could 'travel' by the same process.

"And let's suppose there were a fourth and a fifth and so on. Would we be able to 'travel' eventually into the world of absolute reality? We can't know, of course; but I doubt it."

"I'VE BEEN thinking," I said.

"Suppose these worlds had different laws of physics. That would be something to tie on to. In the Matrix worlds the laws of physics are of course psychological laws governing the behavior of the master Matrix—analogueous to the reality being thoughts in the mind of God as expounded by some early philosophers. Unless reality is just another such matrix we must postulate that in the one world of actual reality the things-in-themselves are not thoughts."

"Exactly!" Ned Brooke spoke up. "That's the key to the whole problem. We must postulate that there is a world that is not a Matrix world. That's the problem the Hongwee scientists have been studying for the past thousand years. Not with much success, however. I've been studying a lot of their work on the problem and am fairly well acquainted with their approach to it. The more I study it the more hopeless it seems."

"Why hopeless?" I asked.

"How are you going to decide what would be a property of reality?" Ned asked. "What would be your yardstick? Your criterion? In their earlier work on the subject they postulated that reality would be those things common to the Matrix worlds. Since the person's mental complex was the thing that could go from one world into the other at will, they started with the assumption that mental complex was the basic reality. All that

accomplished was to make them go around in circles."

"And how are you going to decide even the least thing about an actual reality that has never been experienced?" Allicassi asked.

"Yes, how?" I echoed. "Can you say that extent is a descriptive property of actual reality? Time? If they aren't it seems to me that actual reality must be totally beyond the experience of anyone."

"All that has been mulled over in the past thousand years by Hongwee scientists," Ned said. "It makes fascinating reading. Just recently one of the scientists published a book that that may bring about a resolution of the whole problem in what may be the ONLY way of ever solving it."

Abwalah and Allicassi nodded sagely.

"This scientist," Ned went on. "Says that the Matrix of the Sacred Mountain must have at one time been blank, just as a newborn child has a blank mind. Where could it have derived the concepts that form it and result in matter, space-time, and energy? Originally these may have been quite different than they are now. Even today there is a certain element of imagination existing in the workings of the Master Matrix—or the cosmos of the Sacred Mountain. Among other things, some things are being forgotten. And even in forgetting the Master Matrix rationalizes.

"Take the gradual decay of Uranium, for example. The Hongwee scientists believe it is a process of forgetting the existence of that element—of simplifying an already too complicated cosmos.

"So this is what this Hongwee scientists proposes: that we concentrate on time travel until we have discovered a way of transferring to the neural networks of the Master Matrix as they were active thousands or mil-

lions of years ago at a time when the Master Matrix had not had time to alter itself by imaginative processes. If we can do that we may be able to discover basic clues to what actual reality is like—clues that don't exist today."

"Say!" I exclaimed excitedly. "That would work! And it can be done, too. Remember my coming to the base of the Sacred Mountain in my shadow body, but arriving at a time years ago?"

NED, ALLICASSI, and Abwalah looked at one another uncomfortably.

"Unfortunately," Allicassi said reluctantly. "You seem to have been the only one who has ever been able to do that. As a matter of fact, it was the speculation over how you had been able to do it, and the very obvious fact that you had actually done it, that opened up this new possibility for discovering in the past what actual reality might be like."

"You mean no one else has ever gone into the past?" I asked incredulously. The three nodded their heads.

"There was something about the formation of that shadow body of yours," Abwalah said. "We think it created a sort of unbalance in the Master Matrix, and that it tried to gain normalcy by shoving one of your bodies—the shadow one—into a past time. It's a sort of answer to the law that a body can't be in two places at the same time."

"So?" I prompted, a sudden light dawning on me.

Ned Brooke grinned at the expression on my face.

"That's right," he said. "We were hoping you might try to regain contact with that shadow body and see if you can't project it backward in time to the very beginning. It must still be back there someplace in the snow

where you built your igloo. Maybe by going there and staying for awhile you could regain contact with it and control it. With the added knowledge you have acquired in the past year about the interrelations of the two worlds you may be able to accomplish time travel."

* * *

The igloo was still intact when Charlie's brothers and I reached it. An hour's digging uncovered the entrance and cleared the snow out of its domed interior. The cross of short poles still stood erect above Charlie's grave. The four brothers, subdued by the realization that the body of their older brother, Charlie, lay just a few feet beneath them, built a small fire of dried moss and blubber. Soon the roof near the chimney hole was glistening from the surface melting produced by the warmth of the smoking fire.

I had left my wife, Nanapochek, back at the Esquimoux village where she had lived most of her life. Grandmama, the matriarch of the village, had wept unashamedly when we had dropped from the skies in one of the new dual helicopters that were becoming such a common sight in the mushrooming winterlands of Alaska.

And now—I looked about the igloo, recalling the days and nights I had spent here with Charlie's sled dogs. They were just outside, with the others. They and I had huddled here in the warmth of the fire while I tried to puzzle out if the body I inhabited were real, or whether the one farther and farther to the north were real.

It had been from this very spot that the shadow body born of my insecurity and bewilderment had been formed, to rise up, seemingly in a dream, and tower above the ragged granite peaks of the nearby mountains and wander among them, a lost soul embodied in a cold north wind

that wailed eerily as it sped up and down the glacier highways that cut the mountains, searching for it knew not what.

This spot was well within the contact field of the Sacred Mountain—the only area in which sub-Matrix formation can take place. In some unknown fashion the quartz-and-iron structure of the Sacred Mountain was able to pick up even the subatomic structure and detail of everything within this field and reproduce it in its mental complex.

Coming here was necessary if I were to hope to pick up the tenuous shadow of that third body of mine. It was something like remembering a word in order to recite a poem. Once the contact with that missing memory element is made the rest flows from the mind smoothly.

In this case the igloo and its associations were the key. In this spot I would be able to reach out in the Mind of the Master Matrix and once again "inhabit" that shadow body. At least that was the hope of the Hongwee scientists.

FOR MYSELF, I rather dreaded it. The memory of those days and nights of a year ago were not pleasant. There had been a strange and Godlike sense of vast power in that body as it shook the mountains with its lightnings. But there had also been the terrible and soundless loneliness that seems almost a physical force in the white vastness of the northland.

So I both looked forward to contacting that shadow body and dreaded contacting it. Yet it was necessary. I thought of the atom scientists with their cyclotrons and betatrons, searching for the nature of reality. I too was about to attempt something that might bring mankind nearer to an understanding of what reality really is. Yet no scientist in his laboratory

could have imagined the nature of my attempt even in his wildest dreams!

If I possibly could, I was to go back in time—back and back, until I was living in the memories of the Sacred Mountain before the time of its plunging Earthward. How many millions of years that might be there was no way of knowing.

Perhaps, as I went back in time, I might encounter pre-historic civilizations that existed before the time of the Hongwees. I might encounter the giant lizard life of the early dawn of the planet.

Or I might find it impossible to travel the lateral neural channels of the Master Matrix. If that were so, then the scientists might never be able to solve the riddle of reality.

A cold, wet something touched the palm of my hand and jerked me abruptly from my reverie. It was King, Charlie's lead dog. He had remembered me and been even more delighted to see me than grandmama had been to see Nanapochek when we had arrived at the village, and had been inseparable from me on the trip here to the igloo.

"Hi, King," I said softly, knotting my fingers in the thick mat of hair on his neck. His answer was a soft whine, and he licked my hand.

His presence made me feel better. No matter where I went on this strange journey, I would know that he was here, his head cupped on his paws, guarding me.

The two of us stood close together while Charlie's brothers brought in the blankets and furs that were to form my bed while I slept.

To the north at the base of the Sacred Mountain my Matrix body was deep in a drugged sleep. It had been decided that would be best on this first attempt to contact my shadow body. Experimentally I tried to "transfer" to my drugged Matrix

body, but could detect no sign of its existence. Drugged, it might as well not exist so far as my ability to contact it was concerned.

* * *

A MOMENT before, I had been sleepily watching the flickering yellow flames of the blubber fire, King's bushy head resting on my sprawled-out legs. Without any apparent transition I was standing on the other side of the fire, looking across at my sleeping form.

There was something wrong, though. I tried to puzzle it out. The dogs were curled up—crowded against one another in the close quarters of the igloo.

The hair on the nape of my neck began to stand up as realization sunk in that what I was seeing was not my sleeping form that I had just left, but the sleeping form I had left a year before. I was—not in the present of the time stream—but in the time front of a year past.

How could that be? That sleeping body of mine was not in the Matrix of the Sacred Mountain, but in the reality of the modern world. Did it mean that travel into the past was occurring in both worlds simultaneously?

An overwhelming sense of loss possessed me suddenly. I felt—cut off. A fear descended on me that if I were to sink into my body, lying asleep there, I would be trapped in the past and never be able to catch up to the present again!

I fought down the fear and the panic. After all, this was not real. What I had done was merely to gain a foothold in the memories of the Master Matrix of the Sacred Mountain. It was no more startling than it would have been for me to relive the same period in my own memory.

I sensed the icy ceiling of the igloo press down on me and pass through.

I was expanding. I looked down at the shrinking igloo below me, and could see no sign of the camp that would have been there if the time were the present. I felt again the panic of being stranded in the dead past. I tried to stop my expansion, but seemed unable to.

Soon the valley was far below, and the gray blanket of clouds in the sky was a dense ceiling that came down dangerously close to my head. I looked down, and it was like being in a plane so far up that I seemed apart from the ground. My body, if I had one, was now so tenuous that it couldn't be seen.

I sensed myself wondering how I would move—as if this situation were something new. I felt myself take an experimental step. I felt my startled amazement as the scenery below glided swiftly past—as if it were unexpected. Yet every minute detail of not only events, but thoughts and emotions, was horribly, horribly familiar.

What was happening was exactly what HAD happened—and I could no more change it than the characters on the cinema screen can alter their behavior. It was like that city at the base of the Sacred Mountain where I wandered, a disembodied spirit, seemingly, while the people moved about and were unaware of me. The memory of that scene rose vividly in my mind—and suddenly the valley was gone. I was standing on the street of the city as I had done the other time.

I rushed forward to greet the people, and stopped, puzzled. They didn't seem to be aware of my presence. And I became aware that I was two minds; one behaving exactly as it had the first time, the other trying desperately to affect the first in some way.

Once more it was like viewing a series of events frozen into a pattern by

the movie camera. And while the me of the past became exasperated, angry, lonely, and reacted to these emotions, the me of the "present" was busy trying to figure things out.

I realized now HOW I was able to transfer to the so-called past. I had done so at the igloo by recapturing the vivid image that was the key to the past event I wished to live in. When I had brought into consciousness the vivid memory of this present scene at the base of the Sacred Mountain I had again switched positions.

IT WAS TIME travel. It was not travel backward in some cosmic and universal time stream; but travel backward in the time stream peculiar to the Master Matrix. In the Matrix I had now become a spark of consciousness divorced from the "front" of time in which my Matrix body lay drugged. The part of me in this past time was the same part that was able to transfer from one world to the other. Whatever it might be, energy pattern, soul, spirit, or some basic reality existing in the seas of illusion, it was now, in a limited way, playing the same role in the memories of the Master Matrix as consciousness does in the ordinary mind of the individual.

The events going on about me had once been formed in the progress of the consciousness front of the Master Matrix. After they were formed, each event had its place in the time stream of memory, but became frozen in the cosmic time stream.

I, the spark of awareness, was different than the events going on about me in that I was in the time stream of the consciousness front, while being aware of this past time. In other words, the events about me were frozen just as each individual picture of a moving picture is frozen. I was the

person sitting in the darkened auditorium, while the drama of events played on the screen.

How could I take the next step in my journey backward in time? What was going on 'as no more than I could have recalled in my own memories. The first time I had been to this city of the past had been travel into parts of the past I knew nothing about. If I were to go back farther I would have to do it the way I had unconsciously done it then. But HOW had I done it then?

I had done it by being two of me. Being two rather than one had contradicted the laws of thought of the Master Matrix, or its laws of physics—with the result that one of me had been shoved into a past time. Or—

Suddenly I knew what had happened. The Master Matrix had not shoved me into a past time at all! It had simply ejected me from its consciousness front, and I, unable to comprehend being without being somewhere, had done the rest myself! Expelled from so-called reality, in the timeless, spaceless regions of the mind of the Master Matrix, I had slipped "in" again at a point in time that fitted with what I was conditioned to accept as real.

The whole thing had obeyed the laws of dreams. The size of my shadow body had been dictated by my desire to be able to travel over the ice flows easily and swiftly. I had WANTED a city and civilization at the base of the Sacred Mountain. Since there had been at one time, I had entered that time.

But it was not the law of MY dreams. It was the law of dreams acting in the mind of the Master Matrix, dictated by my compulsion for wish fulfillment.

Without any volition on my part I was suddenly aware that I was back

in the igloo, my eyes open, the yellow flames of the blubber fire casting eerie shadows on the dirty-white walls. King was still asleep with his massive head pillowed on the furs that covered my legs. I carefully extricated my arm from the furs and blankets and looked at my watch in the dim light. Less than half an hour had passed since I had lain down to sleep!

I DIDN'T move, but lay there thinking over the startling conclusion I had formed about time travel in the Master Matrix. Time travel would obey the laws of dreams. I wasn't exactly sure what I meant by that, nor did I see how it would make it possible for me to travel backward in time.

What did it mean? I watched the lazy play of yellow flames in the center of the igloo floor while I tried to put my finger on something definite.

Slowly a realization of what it meant came to me. For the first time I was able fully to accept the fact that the Master Matrix was a mind, and not a physical structure that occupied the space it seemed to occupy. The solid matter that made up the world of the Matrix was also nothing but ideas in that vast mind. I—I might be something more than just an idea; but even if I were, my Matrix body was itself nothing more than an idea complex.

At first I drew back from the implications of that statement as I would from death itself. It meant—it meant that I could separate myself from all association with a personal body. I could become a disembodied focus of awareness, free of the ties of time and space and matter, which were necessary to me only because I believed they were.

Perhaps they were partly necessary to me because the thoughts of the Master Matrix were in terms of mat-

ter and space and time, so that "it" could accept me only with a body. Or perhaps—

The snow covered valley was below me. I was directly above the igloo. The camp was there. I knew that I was in the present—yet I had no body.

A feeling of freedom dominated me—freedom and confidence. I willed myself backward in time a few hours, and watched our arrival at the igloo. I watched as hours passed slowly—and knew that the elapsed time had no real meaning for me. To wait out a day or a century was no different to me in my present state of existence than to travel a mile or a hundred miles.

I saw that space was a subterfuge of the Master Matrix that was used to get from one idea to another, and that time was the same kind of subterfuge. They were not exactly subterfuges, but were more on the order of functional associations, on a mental level.

I willed myself to the base of the Sacred Mountain. Instantly I was in the room where my unconscious body lay in drugged sleep. Nanapochek was sitting at my bedside.

"Nana!" I whispered.

Startled, she looked around. Her eyes, wide and dark from lack of sleep, stared at the spot where I hovered. She sensed my presence and my location, but could not see me.

"I'm Craig," I whispered. As I whispered it I was aware that I was not whispering at all, but was still using the tools of thought that I was accustomed to.

"Craig?" Nana said slowly, questioningly. "But—are you dead then?"

"No," I assured her. "I am not dead. When the effects of the drug wear off call to me and I will come back at once. Do you understand?"

She nodded wordlessly.

"I'm going now," I said. "Goodbye for now."

I didn't move—in space. Instead, I moved back in time. It was like a water bug darting on the surface of a stream. I would dart backward a year or so in time, then pause for a few moments and watch as the time stream flowed normally, carrying me forward again. Then I would dart back another year or so.

Soon this became almost an automatic process, just like walking. I compared it with walking, then began to wonder if there might be some way of improving it, such as slowing down my time-backward hops enough to be aware of things around me, and thus eliminate the necessity for pauses to learn what was going on.

IMMEDIATELY there was a change so startling that I could endure it for only a brief instant. The next instant I was in the igloo, staring wide eyed at the blubber fire, the back of my head tingling as if charged with electricity.

I "knew" what had happened. I had seen briefly, a time-continuum in place of the moving point of time. Something I had read once came into my mind. It was an article that claimed that rabbits can't see stationary objects, but only moving objects. If that were so, a rabbit could see stationary objects if it were moving itself. Then a running rabbit would see everything about it clearly, but everything would vanish the instant the rabbit stopped running, if nothing else were moving.

If conscious awareness in a rabbit were dependent on moving things, then when nothing moved, the rabbit would sense no lapse of time until something did move. Thus, a rabbit could take one hop, seeing things while it hopped, rest a month without being aware of any lapse of time,

and after that take another hop and, so far as its conscious awareness of time is concerned, it would have taken the two hops one immediately after the other.

In that purely hypothetical picture a stationary object would be beyond the rabbit's experience. In the same way, an interval of time is beyond the experience of a human. And I had experienced it!

I could still see it in memory, but how could I possibly describe it? By analogy with space? To one who has not experienced it that might seem possible; but any such analogy would hold only vaguely. It was something qualitatively different than anything experienced before. It was a panorama. It was stretched out before me, fading off into the past and into the future.

I could perceive the bits of it as though they were stationary. I could distinguish the space-dimensional parts in their time-dimensional components.

A man entering a room, moving about, and finally leaving the room again, would seem one continuous object in one sense of the word; but the one continuous object would not be like any object of purely space dimensions.

Suddenly I remembered my algebra. I knew how to picture it. A man entering a room, moving about, and leaving the room after ten minutes, would seem so high, so heavy, and ten minutes long. The room itself, stationary in space but seen in an extended, simultaneous time interval, would be long in time.

How long would ten minutes be, as compared to a foot of length? The question seemed silly at first, but I quickly realized that it would have a sensible answer. There was a clock on the wall of the room where my drugged Matrix body lay sleeping. If

I could go there and view the clock in a time continuum I would be able to estimate.

Instantly I found myself there. I was in the same position in the room that I had occupied a few brief minutes before. Hesitating only a moment, I "switched". This time I was prepared for the strange sensations that beat at my consciousness. I was able to control my emotions and hold myself steady, even though I felt the drag of time trying to force me back into the stream.

TEN MINUTES was too short to estimate. An hour was no "longer" than a small part of an inch. I moved very close to the clock and carefully counted, and discovered that a hundred hours was about an inch long.

The effort and strain were terrific. I "let go" when I had finished, and found myself back in the igloo again, still staring at the flames.

After a while the tingling sensation in my brain died down. I was able to relax again. But now, a new question rose in my mind.

Since time is a measure of motion, and I had been outside time, viewing it as a "motionless" continuum, how had I been able to move closer to the clock? Were there two kinds of time?

Of course there were. The so-called time in the past of the Master Matrix was not time in the real sense at all! It was just an idea-association, in the same way space itself was. I, the focus of awareness that was all that remained of me in these travels, was still existing in the actual present. I was a minute spark of the vast consciousness-front that was able to break away and move about the entire mental Matrix, which was itself rigid and unchangeable in its already implanted past.

How wonderfully complex and

detailed it all was! Even the play of light and shadow on the inner walls of the igloo, the vagaries of the yellow flames that rose from the pan of fat, sending spirals of dirty smoke upward toward the small opening in the roof would be recorded permanently, so that at any time I would be able to come back and watch them again.

It was almost too perfect and too detailed. Assuming it were all really nothing more than condenser charges in the matrix of quartz and iron, how was it possible for the minute charges whose interrelations gave rise to the grand illusion to remain so perfect, without dissipation or loss, over the centuries?

I shook my head to snap myself out of the mood of doubt that was settling on me. The human mind, rising from the functioning of something far more fluid and far less stable, was able to freeze incredible details for a lifetime. Surely the quartz-and-iron matrix, working on the same principles, could do the same for a much longer time.

By an effort of will I pulled my thoughts away from such fruitless speculations. I began to mull over the possibilities of the new powers I possessed.

I was able now to leave my body easily and travel instantly to almost any spot or any time. I was able to move in the time stream in the usual way, or stand apart from it and view events as four dimensional stationary wholes. I could, perhaps, plunge in one vast stride back to the very beginnings of mind in the Master Matrix.

There would be no danger involved. Past events were frozen and unalterable. I could play the part of disembodied observer only.

I took one last look at the yellow flames. Then I closed my eyes and willed myself to go backward in time

to the very beginning.

Nothing happened. I was still in my body, still in the present. What was wrong? Disappointment overwhelmed me momentarily. I had become so accustomed to success that it hadn't occurred to me that I would not be able to do what I willed myself to do.

The tingling sensation that had come to the back of my brain when I had viewed time-broad events began to grow again. At first I laid it down to nervousness and disappointment at my failure; but it grew rapidly until it was stronger than it had ever been.

I began to be afraid and to struggle against it. My fear grew to panic, then terror. I struggled to rise.

The whole universe exploded in a cascade of fire and thunder. I had a vague impression of the interior of the igloo melting in a distorted manner as scenery distorts when viewed through an uneven mirror. After that came—blackness.

* * *

“WHAT do you see, Bardo?”

For a fleeting instant the words seemed strange—almost alien. I opened my eyes cautiously. The familiar features of my master, Nedzir, Overlord of the Roumian Empire, hovered a few feet away.

Lying in its folds of blue velvet between us on the table was the crystal into which I had been peering. My eyes dropped to it again. Strangely, it seemed to lie, not before me, but a hundred miles away—and it seemed to be gigantic. I tried to cling to the illusion. I felt that there must be some reason for it.

“What do you see, Bardo?” Nedzir asked again.

“Quiet,” I murmured softly, trying to hold on to the strange feeling. “There is something...”

What was it? I tried to remember.

I tried to peer deeply into the crystal. It blurred queerly, seeming to stretch out into a curving tube of glass.

I blinked wearily and looked up at Nedzir. The feeling I had been searching for was coming now. I could sense it. It always began as an electrical tingling in the back of my brain. In a moment now...

Nedzir's bearded face seemed to be retreating dizzily to vast distances. The wavering yellow flame of the torch he held seemed to become a long tube of shining gold, curving toward the exit from my tent.

I wanted to follow it, but my mind began to wander. I was remembering when I had first found the crystal. It had been when I was much younger. I had been travelling in the forests to the south, and had made camp for the night. A hard lump under my bedding had kept me awake. Finally I had grown angry at it and, pulling my bedding to one side, had dug up the offending stone.

Something about it—whether its unnatural warmth or some sixth sense—had caused me carefully to put it away in my pack before going back to sleep. And as I lay there with my head pillowed on my pack the warmth of the stone had seeped outward. I had slept. Strange dreams had come to me. They had been prophetic dreams, warning of invasion from the skies.

I had been afraid to tell anyone of my dreams—until the invasion came. Then I had realized the dreams were true, and had gone to Nedzir and told him how he could defeat the invaders.

He had marveled at the wisdom of my advice until I had confessed the truth—that my wisdom had come from the crystal. After that Nedzir had grown powerful, until now he was the greatest ruler of all history, and

I was his counselor, his seer.

I was remembering now how I had found the crystal, and wondering how it had gotten there, half buried in the loam of the forest.

It was a strange stone. Sometimes I imagined I was inside the crystal looking out, and the world inside it was the same as the one outside it. I felt that way now.

I could almost see my counterpart in the crystal, holding another crystal exactly like it, peering into the future. And it seemed that the crystal I held in the crystal held the world itself in some strange fashion.

Without warning dark figures loomed at the entrance to my tent. I heard a muffled groan as Nedzir toppled toward me. Fear of death gripped the muscles of my throat. The tent, feebly illuminated by the yellow flame of the torch, seemed to blur and flow like a reflection in a stream. A shadow was towering over me...

I OPENED my eyes. The yellow flames of the blubber fire crackled softly. The ice ceiling of the igloo glistened with dirty, translucent shine. King sighed deeply in his sleep.

One word was in my mind, blotting out all else. That word was the FUTURE. Why had I not thought of it before? Of course the secret of reality lay in the future!

It was utter foolishness to search for it in the past. Assuming the Matrix was originally blank, how could one find a comprehension of anything in that blank beginning?

I—Bardo, or Craig Brown—it had been someone named Bardo, and I had become a part of him—had been able to foresee the future. I could do the same.

If I were in some way to discover the nature of actual reality, I would

know it in a week, or a year, or ten years. All I need do would be to go ten years into the future and find out if I knew it. If I didn't I could give up this quest, knowing that I would never find success at it.

But the future—would it be as unalterable and safe as the fixed past?

I reached under the furs and blankets and felt for my pipe and tobacco pouch, careful not to wake up King. I wanted to think. There were too many things.

For example, even yet I had a queer feeling that I had not just been a part of Bardo, but had actually been Bardo in some forgotten past. That certainly couldn't be true; but it pointed the way toward something I hadn't thought about. As a totally disembodied spark of awareness, would it not be possible for me to enter and in some way become associated with the inner thoughts of any person, past or present?

For another example, how had I arrived at the particular point in time and space where I would apparently find out something about the past of the Sacred Mountain? And how large a planet had it been where a mass that was a huge mountain to us was no more than a stone as large as a fist?

And what connection was there with the crystals that fortune tellers gazed into? I had always taken it for granted that fortune telling by crystal gazers was a lot of bunk, and in cases where there might be genuine fortune telling it was through some ability in the fortune teller—that he used the crystal as a prop to impress the customer.

Even if that were so, where did the idea originate? So many occult practices seemed to have their origins in some past science, preserving the motions while the science itself was lost.

Maybe at one time fragments of the Sacred Mountain were used as port-

able contacts with the Sacred Mountain itself. Maybe such a fragment was what Bardo had had. That seemed more likely, since it was utterly improbable that the entire mountain had at one time been on a planet where men were a hundred miles or more tall—as one would have to be to carry the mountain in his packsack.

SO MANY occult things seemed to tie in, and have their explanations in what I was experiencing. Spirits of the dead! Could they not be disembodied sparks of awareness as I was in my extra-temporal existence? Planes of existence. What was the relationship of the world of the Matrix to the world I was born in? In the Matrix world one could be immortal. In the Matrix world no children were born. There were thousands of people in the world, as I had found, who existed in both worlds and worked for humanity and its betterment.

I didn't know every detail of this organization. It was too vast and too spread-out to learn all about in one year. I was, in a manner of speaking, a beginner. Only my special ability brought about by the creation of my shadow body had set me apart.

I wondered if it were necessary for me to remain here at the igloo for future experiments. I had dispensed with the necessity of my shadow body entirely—or so it seemed.

How had I done it? The moment I formed that question I knew I had put my finger on the thing that was really troubling me. My successes were too easy, too efficient. It was almost as if—as if something or someone were controlling me!

Too late, I realized that I had willed myself to contact whatever might be directing my travels and experiences. Abruptly I found myself

standing beside a railing, overlooking a vast maze of scientific looking machinery.

Alarm and self condemnation were replaced quickly by interest in my new surroundings. Was I in the future? If so, how far into the future? What was this machinery?

In some ways it looked like a modern power station. There were encased units squatting in isolation on the huge expanse of concrete floor. There were what seemed at first glance to be huge steam pipes covered with asbestos insulation, but which on second glance seemed strangely similar to wires and coils in a radio set. There were long rows of control panels along one wall of the giant room, with hundreds of glass covered instruments dotting the dark panels.

SUDDENLY it penetrated my mind that I was standing, with my hands resting on the guard rail. I looked at my hands curiously, remembering my experience at being Bardo, and wondering who I might be now. They seemed to be my own hands. There was even the faint scar where I had tried to burn a wart off with lye when I was ten or twelve years old.

But the sleeves of the jacket I wore were strange in design and fabric. So also were the rest of my clothes as I explored my body.

I saw now that I was on a narrow walk that spiraled downward in circles that were about twenty feet across. Each complete circle dropped the walked about nine feet in a uniform slope. Bending over and looking down, I saw that the spiral walk ended at the floor of the immense room below.

I started walking along the narrow walk. Immediately a force seemed to grip me and play through me. It painted queer designs of coils and

inverted machines out over those in the room.

Dizzy, I paused. Instantly things became as they were. The force disappeared.

Slowly the thousand and one impressions that had been present filtered into consciousness where I could look at them without the distraction of the body shaking emotional forces that had played through me. And as the impressions came into consciousness they clicked into place. I began to understand "where" and "when" I was. I also began to understand "what" I was.

I began to understand that the spiral walk on which I stood was really a coil—and yet not a coil in the same sense as a spiral of copper wire. I began to sense that within the spiral walk was another, and unseen, spiral walk.

Yet neither the one I was on nor the unseen one on which I also "stood" in some strange fashion really existed!

With that realization I suddenly became sure of myself. I "separated" slightly from myself, standing there on the walk, and was once again in the igloo, covered with furs and blankets, my eyes watching the play of yellow flames in the blubber fire. I was in the igloo—and also in the giant room filled with machines and coils.

The relationship of my two bodies was the same as it had been a year before when I was in the igloo and also travelling north toward the Sacred Mountain.

I looked out over the vast expanse of machinery and spiral pipes and instrument panels and knew that it was in its way another Sacred Mountain.

I looked at the spiral walk on which I stood and knew that each small part of its spiral length was the Sacred Mountain at some instant of

time.

I knew, too, that none of it was so—that it was all a rationalization of something which I could not grasp or envision except in terms of space and time and shape.

My journey northward over the glaciers toward the Sacred Mountain the year before had its analogue in my present journey. Then I had traveled through space to a static Master Matrix which was yet not static, but only static relative to that Master Matrix which was the reality into which I had been born.

I REALIZED now that the relationship between them was analogous to the magnetic induction between two coils which induced a current in one that was a function of the change in current in the other. The coils were invisible, stretching ahead and backward in time itself.

Now I existed and was aware in still a third plane of existence. I was, in a way, one step further toward actual reality, yet still seeing reality through the screen of illusion that distorted it into patterns of space and time and shape which had only a vague relationship to the reality it stemmed from.

I was a spark of electricity in a wire—a part of a dynamic, flowing current—that had suddenly become able to perceive the circuit in which I existed. I stood poised, as it were, looking out over the circuit, while I also continued to exist in that circuit.

I had reached my present vantage point by successive stages. By some quirk of time-induction I had been at first able to become divorced from the time-wave front. I had been able to travel backward in time and stop relative to the advancing wave fronts of the past.

Then I had been able to perceive

small segments of the "wire" in which the current flowed. Finally I had been able to perceive the entire circuit—or perhaps a half of it.

When I had moved with the "front" by the subterfuge of seeming to walk along the spiral catwalk a dim perception of the other half of the circuit had been generated by the induction field of my "walking."

It was there all the time but I could not be aware of it unless I were changing in some way analogous to an electric current changing its potential in a wire. I was like the rabbit who can't see anything but moving objects.

And I was like an induced current in a coil—non-existent unless a current in some other wire close by were *changing*. The clues were all in my mind. It seemed that some little thing could fill the gap between me and a true comprehension of actual reality.

I felt that I could reach out and grasp the clue, and that when I did I would know Truth. I would know what reality was, and in what way the illusions in which we exist are related to it.

I felt it, and yet I drew back from it. I felt a fear of learning the Truth. And I understood that fear. Suppose I were to learn that rather than being a man, rather than being the husband of Nanapochek, and rather than existing in a world and being part of civilized society, I was some disembodied spark of force in a coldly mechanistic cosmic radio circuit. Suppose that learning the Truth would destroy forever the illusions that had always been my reality.

To acquire some sort of cosmic sanity and disillusionment at the expense of losing everything I held dear was too great a price to pay—and I had no way of knowing what price would be exacted of me ahead of time.

I had already seen enough and experienced enough to sense that the reality in which time and space were one continuity in which I could exist in a sort of extra-temporal simultaneity would do things to my consciousness that might soon make me unable to exist in the temporal front of what we so loosely term the "present".

I HAD SEEN and experienced enough to formulate a high sounding statement about the relationship of what we know of the cosmos and what it seems to be, and what it actually is.

I could go the final step—or turn back, and none would be the wiser. I could go back, and cultivate my budding extra—temporal powers slowly and carefully. Perhaps some day when I became more sure of myself I could return to this position on a cosmic catwalk and reach out with confidence and a feeling of security, and grasp that final vision that would come when I walked with firm stride along it and withstood the powerful forces that walk would induce in my mind.

Looking out over the vast room with its silently squat and uncommunicative units and its geometrical—ly beautiful array of hypertubing, I made my decision.

The yellow flames of the blubber fire seemed to super-impose in the space of the large room and consume it. Without moving from my vantage point on the catwalk I was suddenly not there.

I was sitting in the igloo, my legs numb from long hours in one position with King's weight on them. My pipe was laying on the furs that covered me.

I picked it up and lit it, dragging in the aromatic smoke and letting it fill my lungs with its stimulus. The experiences of the night—or were

they nothing more than dreams?—retreated into the remoteness of memory.

The canvas covering the entrance to the igloo pulled to one side revealing the enquiring features of one of Charlie's brothers, coming to see if I were awake yet. King lifted his head and turned to blink at him.

Groaning at the pain that shot through my legs, I threw off my covers and stood up. The face at the entrance disappeared briefly, then returned. Charlie's brother came all the way in and held out a steaming plate of food.

"You like?" he asked, grinning.

"Yes," I said, sniffing. "I like. But take it out. I'll be out in a minute and eat with the rest of you."

I LOOKED out over the audience of Hongwee scientists that filled the auditorium and was careful to keep a polite smile on my face to cloak my emotions. A tall, somewhat Indian type of man was addressing the gathering in Hongwee which I knew by now as well as my native American language. Beside me sat Ned Brooke.

And while I sat quietly watching, I was also poised, a bodiless focus of awareness, in another room just off the platform where an even dozen Hongwee scientists were preparing a test for me.

None of them were aware I was present in that room. If they had been aware of it it would have made no difference to them, because I had claimed I **COULD** be present in that room in a bodiless state. That claim of mine was the basis of the test about to be performed.

It was to be a very simple one. A sealed deck of playing cards would be broken open. The scientist sitting at the head of the table in that room was to do that, then shuffle the cards

as much as he wished, in any way he chose. After he had thoroughly mixed them up he was to pass them on to the man sitting at his right. Each of the twelve about the table was to shuffle the cards to his heart's content. Then they were to be brought out to where I was sitting on the platform.

On the table on the platform a similar deck of cards rested at my elbow. Shortly now, before the shuffling in the other room began, I was to break the seal on the deck at my elbow and arrange the cards in the same order as they would be in that other deck after it had been shuffled by the twelve scientists. I was to do that in full view of the assembled scientists, then place the deck back in its box and hand it to the man who was now speaking.

He finished talking and looked toward me, nodding. That was my cue to start arranging. In the other room I jumped ahead in time. The seventh scientist was busy shuffling. I jumped ahead again. The twelfth man had finished his shuffle and was placing the deck back in its box.

Now came the part that was hard on me. I had rehearsed what I was about to do several times. The forces that would play through me would be painful.

To me in my disembodied state the twelve scientists in the room suddenly became motionless and four dimensional. I reached in and spread out the cards so that I could read them in proper order. I did this without hands or body, by mental force alone.

And on the platform in the auditorium I calmly read them off and sorted the cards in plain view of those present in the same order as the other deck.

WHEN I had finished, I put that deck in its box and handed it to

the man sitting at the center of the table. He accepted it with dainty fingers and cautiously laid it in front of him on the table. Every eye in the auditorium rested on it as a messenger was sent to inform the twelve scientists that they were to begin their shuffle.

I sat back and closed my eyes to wait. And in the other world at the Esquimoux village in the lodge Nana smiled encouragingly at me. I returned her smile and told her briefly what was happening.

At the same time I watched the shuffle as a disembodied observation point again. I watched the twelve men as they tried to outwit me by cutting the cards unexpectedly, passing them back to one who had already shuffled for an extra shuffle, and other spontaneous tricks.

Spontaneous? How could they be, if the end result would be exactly what I had foreseen? I looked out over the audience at the hundreds of faces that watched and waited. In the time-broad continuity of eternity they had been watching and waiting there since the dawn of time itself. They had been there, watching and waiting, when they had been first born.

And yet they hadn't. I could see the whole thing now, vaguely. There was *something* there that was permanent and unchangeable. It was the cosmic rocks and banks of the stream. It was the cosmic crystalline structure of the wire in the coil. And the spirit that inhabited it, that rushed along the cosmic channel, was the only changeable thing. We, they and I and all things in our world of seeming reality, were a wave front that shapes itself to the contours of what it passes through.

I could see that now. The reality which we knew was not reality at all, but only the CHANGES in reality. Things that didn't change were non-

existent to us.

Reality was a cosmic juke box—true reality. It was the machine and the record. It was the grooves in the record. And all these were beyond experience and seeming reality. All that we could ever experience, all that we could ever know, would stem only from the quivering of the needle as it scraped along the groove.

Each of us was a little induction coil. Or rather, each of us was nothing more than the induced current in a little cosmic induction coil. An induced current—

In my mind rose the vision of that strange powerhouse. It, like the Sacred Mountain, I now realized to be an illusion cloaking something that might be beyond comprehension, but cloaking it in such a way that it pointed toward Truth, if only symbolically.

An induced current is a movement of electrons, which are eternal. In the same way, perhaps the real "I" was a similar eternal something, and the activities of my life or lives was all that gave me self awareness! Without the induction field of reality playing on me I would not be aware, even of my own existence; yet I would exist. Just as the electrons exist in a coil, and their movement under a changing magnetic field is the current.

THE COMPARING of the two decks of cards was going on now. I was aware of that as I sat at the table, my eyes half closed. But also I was now standing on the catwalk that spiraled upward in the vast space of the power house again.

I looked out over the room at the rows of control panels and the squat, unmoving units connected with thick piping or tubing. I knew it for what it was now. It was a second Sacred Mountain. The first, the one resting

in the frozen North of the Earth, was a stationery, static thing. This was the same in a four dimensional sense, and dynamic in the three dimensional sense.

I was not afraid this time. I knew what I had come here to do. What had I started out to do when I returned to the igloo and contacted my shadow body? I had started out to go back in time to the very beginning of time and discover the origin of the Sacred Mountain in the hopes of thereby discovering some vital clue to the nature of true reality.

Before me lay the way. At my feet—or perhaps enclosing me—was the world of the Matrix now, where Hongwee scientists watched as the two decks of cards were compared. If I were to take a step I would be able to sense that other spiral that contained the world and the universe of the reality in which I had been born. One lay within the other. They acted on each other by a cosmic law of induction.

I leaned over the rail and looked down at the gracefully descending sweep of the spiral to the point where it touched the floor of the room. There—there where the coil began—that was my goal, for it was there that time began for the two worlds that I knew.

The forces that tore at my very being would not be intolerable. They would not destroy me, because, as I now knew, my Being was indestructible and eternal. I could walk down the spiral catwalk to its beginning and enter my world at the time it was being created.

I knew I had once been there, when the world began. I had traveled upward in the spiral with the wave front that we know as the present, which moves with stately procession through the timeless reality of the past and the future.

I could go back there again. Whatever the process by which I had “separated” from the wave front, to my conscious mind I was able to go back by the process of walking.

I took my hands off the guard rail and stood erect, bracing myself for what was to come. I clenched my fists and took a first, slow step.

The auditorium with its audience of Hongwee scientists faded from consciousness. Shadowy coils and spirals emerged in the space of the power house.

I took another step. The shadowy spirals became more solid. The unseen forces rushing through me rose into a crescendo of screaming, frigid blizzard. I leaned into the forces that tore through me. I lowered my head and pulled myself along with the aid of the guard rail.

Slowly the forces lessened in intensity. I felt strange changes taking place in my being, and with each change the forces grew less harsh.

Finally I could lift my head and take my hands off the guard rail and walk normally. I opened my eyes and looked out over the vast room, and it was no longer there.

In its place was something indescribable to man—and beautiful beyond the experience of man. It held a geometry of Space and Time and *something that was not either of these and not known to man because in all the reality of change it is unchangeable and therefore non-existent to the senses of man.*

A music was playing in my ears—a music in which the rise and fall of Rome, the civilization of ancient Greece, and the building of the pyramids were but single notes.

I walked the circle of the spiral until I was just below where I had first stood. Without pause I walked on, my stride firm and sure. Each circling of the spiral took me one

cycle lower in the rhythm of the cosmos—one stage farther back in the Time of the universe.

And around me as I walked I felt those immortal sparks, the souls of men, in wave after wave of Time, as they, too, sped forward over the contours of history that I and all my friends had experienced, in our progression through successive lives since the dawn of time.

About me, and throughout the vast expanse of that incomprehensible Place which had at first seemed to me

to be a power house, moved other Beings. They were the Gods and Creators of All, to the understanding of Man; and for this brief sojourn I was one of them.

A song welled up in my soul as I walked. A song born of confidence and the knowledge that I would return the way I had come, and in the future of Man I would be able to show him the way to follow where I had gone, so that he, too, would be a God.

THE END

SINISTER BLACKOUT



By GEORGE LEE



A CLOAK of darkness has been flung over the United States. Of course this cloak is invisible to ninety nine percent of the people, but it is none the less real. Though it immediately effects only a small percentage of the people, ultimately it will effect everyone. The metaphor refers to the scientific security blackout that has been laid down by the government.

During the war when technology and science were prime tools for its winning, the secrecy blanket was a necessity. For the first time in all the history of science, the greatest international society of all, the fraternity of scientists, was broken up, and each scientific group pursued its own way seeking to ever better weapons and instruments of destruction.

And when the atomic bomb was developed with all its horrible by products, the secrecy blanket was still maintained—end of the war or no end of the war. This policy was followed in all countries and gradually seemed to extend to almost all branches of physical and to a certain extent, biological, science. Science was enveloped in a cloak through which no intercommunication could be maintained. Perhaps this is a good thing—many governmental leaders seem to think so. But put the question to almost any scientist—and he'll tear his hair out!

Scientific activity, up until the Second World War, knew absolutely no national barriers at all. All scientists were brothers the result was that everyone in the world knew what everyone else was doing. A scientific discovery in Germany was immediately confirmed and repeated elsewhere. The fission of Uranium was such a specific incident. The result of such fraternal communication meant that there was no duplication of effort, that the best brains from everywhere knew everything about a problem. It was an ideal situation.

In our country scientists are waging a

bitter battle to have the shackles of security removed from fundamental science—without too much success. The military mind is incapable of distinguishing between a fundamental scientific advance and an engineering project which produces a weapon—like the Bomb—or radar—or rockets.

The United States, contrary to general belief—is not regarded as a real contender in the field of fundamental science. America is an engineering land. Of all the marvelous developments which came out of the war, the majority of the discoveries had been made by scientists in Europe and Asia. The scientific fundamentals were all known. American engineering know-how translated theoretical science into applied engineering.

But now the backlog of pre-war fundamental science has been well mined. Europe is not producing much fundamental science any longer. It is up to the United States to carry the torch. But science flourishes only in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom. Men of scientific good will must be free to correspond with whom they wish, to publish what they want, to talk with whom they please. Only in this way is it possible for that glorious golden scientific intellectualism to blossom forth with the full fruits. Scientists, it must be understood, do not advocate giving away military secrets. They oppose releasing the latest data on say rockets or jet engines or atomic bombs. But the basic ideas are no secret to anyone. Therefore scientists cry for freedom. From where we sit and from what we can see, something drastic will soon have to be done. The U.S. has potentially the greatest scientific talent in the world, both our own native students and the refugee scientists who have embraced our hospitality. Let them work. In the end it will mean an America so strong that no one can touch us!

Battle in Eternity



There came the smell of scorching flesh, and a cry of pain as the sleeve burned mysteriously with no apparent cause.

By Richard S. Shaver & Chester S. Geier

Time is a strange thing — it may be that a battle can be fought in an hour, or it may take the entire sweep of Time's borderless extent . . .

*"My life is spent; it was a precious sum
Spent like an arrow for the bow's swift
hum."*

Hafiz

GRAYSON RAN his hand through the girl's hair regretfully, where she sat by the pool of the crater which was his stronghold. It was Hell to risk it, but he must. So he said:

"You've got to leave, Thea. I am going to do the deed tomorrow!"

"If you can stay and face it, why can't I?" She turned up her young fresh face to his, smiling and confident of his utter approval. She was

Grayson's dearly beloved ward, more a daughter than any daughter could be.

She made a picture of complete loveliness there outlined against the deep blue of the crater pool, around them the marble benches and exotic shrubs Grayson had planted to relieve the austere chaotic lava of the crater bowl.

"For years, you've been planning for this day, and now it's here, I want to be in on the fireworks." She made a little pleading mouth, but Grayson shook his head vigorously. He mur-



mured softly, bending over her:

"Why do you think I have put it off so long, little bird of paradise? Only to keep you by my side that much longer. But I can put off no longer what must be risked for the sake of all men. I cannot be a coward; if I were, such creatures as your own clean self would not love me, would they?"

It was a pretty little lie, he had rushed the work as hard as he could, but he was a fond sort of parent, and he could not resist the impulse. She laughed. "You tell such sweet lies, dear Professor, of your dark secrets, forever hiding from life behind your screens and wires and retorts and dynamos. You are a fraud, and you want to be alone for awhile. But I do not want to go back to the hot city, when it is so cool and quiet here."

She watched him for a moment, where he stood tall and wide-shouldered, his black hair touched with grey, the lean brown quick hands, the intent piercing, deep-blue eyes. Her sleek brown head turned quizzically, taking in the whole wild scene of the crater he had made into a patio of an immense kind.

"Whatever made you choose this place for your workshop, Paul?"

"It exactly fits my requirements, dear Thea. It is big and remote from other people, and it is enclosed by vast rock walls, no one can be harmed by any blunder on my part. I alone will be killed if I misjudge my ability to handle the new power."

"The new power..." she murmured, stressing in the words the vast meaning it had—power to turn the wheels of the world, to lighten men's load, give them time for thought and study instead of labor. "You make your work seem so important, and us so much less important! Is it really so big, Paul?"

So utterly new?"

"Yes, it is big and new and quite unpredictable in its present stage. Anything can happen! That is why I want no arguments about your leaving now, this night. It is a baby that may throw its bottle quite a long, long way."

"This old volcano you picked for a home, Mt. Falsmor, may turn into an active new volcano, the way you talk!"

"Yes, Thea, it is just that powerful. The volcano may do just that, when I release the giant infant from its swaddling clothes."

ABOVE THE two, talking earnestly there by the deep cold pool, the ancient bore of the volcano thrust up and out, majestically awesome and rugged, letting in the evening sun at the top, and reflecting it from its black, calcined sides again and again in wide dim shafts of strangely altered sun-light.

At the base of the cliffy sides of the shaft, the openings of a score of lava-bubble chambers showed black and ugly, half of them had been changed into doorways by Grayson's workmen, now departed—and led into the immense inner chambers in the base of the mountain. The place was honeycombed with natural passages and lava-bubble chambers formed by the gaseous action of the volcano—and in these naturally perfect insulated chambers Grayson had in the past year built a laboratory second to none, a research laboratory where his brain-child was even now waiting and ready for its first efforts at freedom. That freedom which Grayson feared he would be unable to control.

The shaft itself let in the sun daily for long mid-day hours of beauty, isolated beauty that Grayson had created there of the crater's little lake

and the natural rugged chaotic scene of ancient force and heat and explosions of steam.

Grayson bent and kissed the girl on the forehead, and she got to her feet with one lithe young bound, and fled from the place. She did not want to show her emotions, for she knew very well that she might never see her foster father again. A moment later he heard the motor of her car echoing from the dark openings of the tube that led through the side of the mountain and to the outside world. He sighed, turned back to the big metal-grilled archway in the crater wall that was the locked and guarded entry to his research laboratory.

He was about to leave the tremendous patio-crater, but the sound of an approaching car in the tunnel-entrance gave him pause. He turned back to the pool, and in a moment was greeting a short, wide-bodied little man whose face was quite stern in spite of its rotund, smile-creased rudeness.

"What's all this about you making a will?" growled the little man in a deep bass. "You expect to die overnight, or something?"

Grayson laughed, he always laughed when Jepson, his lawyer, frowned at something. It was so incongruous, like a cuss-word from Santa Claus, or whiskers on a lovely lady.

"Not exactly," said Grayson, "but the experiment I'm working on is the one that blew up my house before, some years ago. I have been spending all my money since getting this place in readiness to go on with the taming of that power. It's something that could change the face of the world."

"Like the atom bomb, by busting it to pieces, I suppose?"

"You remember the work, don't

you? You handled the suits from the neighbors, Jepson."

"Yeh, a new way to split the atom, but it turned out different! I remember it like I remember New Year's Eve, by the headache it gave me."

"What I wanted to do," explained Grayson, "was to drain off the energy of an atomic fission slowly, instead of suddenly. Like putting a faucet to Niagara Falls so we could use it in the kitchen."

As they talked, Grayson had led the way through the locked grill of the opening into his laboratory section of the rock bubbles in the crater walls. He had paused beside a bulking, complicated mechanism taking up the whole of one huge circular chamber. Jepson allowed his jaws to relax, his mouth hung open a little foolishly as he took in the details of the monstrous thing for the first time.

"This is what you've been spending all your good dollars on," he mused, slowly walking around it like a cautious cat circling an elephant.

"Yes, that's my baby. It's complicated only in appearance. In reality it is a simple multiple repetition of the same thing that caused the former explosion, a series of coils focusing magnetic fields upon one small point. I had intended to collapse an atom, but what happened was something else entirely. I tapped a new source of power. I got a much greater flow of energy than my calculations called for, hence the explosion. This time I've figured on it, I'm ready! That's why I want a will drawn, to make sure I haven't forgotten anything;—just in case."

"You know what you're doing, almost, eh? Well, I can't stop you! But why should a focus of magnetic give off power? I don't get it?"

"Well, if I didn't collapse a lot more atoms than I expected, I did

something far more remarkable. I burst through the walls of sub-space, let out the utter power of the sub-structure of the universe. If I didn't do that, I've tapped cosmic power of an entirely unknown kind. That's why I have to draw a will. I may have the means here of letting the walls of space collapse, of boring a hole through dimensions and letting the wind out of matter itself by misplacing the force that holds it in our space. I don't know exactly. That's why I have to experiment, to study this force and learn all I can about it."

"You mean you don't know if you can harness your new cosmic power, but you're going to try. I don't like it, Grayson! You should have built many more small models like your other, not this monster! How do you expect to control the power this gives off if you couldn't handle your smaller model?"

"Exactly why it's big and strong, to stand the strain and still do its job, I want to release the power long enough to know what I've got, to watch it and use it! I can graduate the power I put in, but I can't change the strength of light materials. Here I've got range, I can make a little or a lot of "cosmic power." He put a hand on a switch. "Shall I give you a demonstration?"

Jepson turned pale. "Not for me, Prof! I'll draw up your will, then I'm getting far, far away from here! I can remember what happened before! Took your roof right off!"

THE TWO men walked back out to the coolness of the pool in the evening light, sat on the marble bench by the water.

"You're a famous scientist, Grayson. Why should you risk your value to men in this admittedly dangerous work? Your loss would be ir-

replaceable! Turn it over to the military, or something, let *them* do it! I'd lose a good client, too, you know!"

Grayson laughed. His face was quite indicative then of his reasons for going on with the work, it was the expression of a bronco-buster seeing a wild stallion of beautiful lines for the first time. He wanted to *ride* that mighty horse he had discovered, he was thrilled by the possibilities, he could no more leave it alone than a woman could resist jewelry. He wanted to play with the titan force, and he was going to do it! Jepson sighed. The face of the man told him it was no use.

Later, Grayson escorted the lawyer to his car, parked in the tunnel, shook hands with the little man, watched him drive off. He rubbed his hands together suddenly in a kind of anticipated ecstasy. He was *alone*, he could work now, no one would be in danger but himself!

With a quick hurrying step, Grayson crossed the exotic crater, his eyes thoughtful, but excited, anticipating—what?

Locking the grill behind him, he crossed into the great chamber of the unknown machine of his creation, his eyes caressing its great black steel flanks, resting on each pressure dial and voltmeter, one by one. His fingers twitched a little, he pulled a little switch on the wall, and a glow came from the heart of the great dynamo-like mechanism. It was not an atom-smasher, thought Grayson, it was a *space-smasher*!

He had impervious Mt. Falsmor around him; if he wanted to toy with the forces that held the universe in its frame, it was his own affair. There were no other humans now for miles.

A little hum from the conical coil he had just sent current through told him it was warm. He pulled another

switch, then another. He could no more have delayed this trial of his monstrous creation than he could have shot himself. "Maybe it's the same thing," he mused, as one after another the conical, pointed coils in the heart of the big magnet-frame of his "smasher" warmed into humming, vibrant activity. Each conical point centered in a focus upon a round solid heart of metal, which was pierced by two heavy pipes, pipes reinforced again and again by windings of tempered wire. They were the conveyors of water, to cool the heart of his device. Beneath the round, two-ton piece of metal, a great turbine began slowly to turn. He knew that the sole power that turned that turbine was being manufactured in the heart of the "smasher", the heavy foot-thick power pipes carried the turbine fluid down; and back after it condensed.

DIALS AND gauges began to register, steadily the power output rose, and exultation rose in Grayson, he gave a little cry of sheer joy in accomplishment. The all-pervading hum of the coil vibrations rose to a shrill scream. Grayson's eyes glittered, his hands stretched out to shut off the power. The utter driving *curiosity* of the scientist slowed his hands, he stopped. Why had this happened. The dials and gauges rose in pressure faster and faster, the power-output voltmeter of his turbine was registering full capacity, the whole rocky chamber was suddenly shaking, vibrating, as if his great turbine wheel was off center!

The shrill scream became steadily more and more nerve-wracking. Grayson went on with his arrested motion toward the big cut-off switch on the wall.

One instant he was pressing on the handle of the master switch with both hands, the next he was rushing

up the shaft of the volcano and out into the night!

His friends, watching the great black sides and the cone of the top of Mt. Falsmore, were treated to a sight of the greatest gun on earth being fired. From the top of Mt. Falsmore came a terrific blast of steam, straight up and out of sight into the stratosphere, followed shortly by an eruption's characteristic dust clouds, flying showers of hot rocks, and ending finally as glowing, red-hot lava flowed from the great seams opened in the sides of the no-longer extinct volcano.

* * *

Whatever ultimate components the body of Dr. Grayson had been blown to; whatever inner ego of all life still survived after that Devil's Inferno of atomic fire and infinite pressure and heat beyond computation of degree that he had released within the ancient crater of the mountain—whatever he was now that all that rushing, so similar to the rush of a shell up the shaft of a cannon and on into space had ceased; Grayson found that he still lived!

Found himself speeding on and on, his velocity of flight incomputable, while stars and planets and the numberless vortical barrier walls of what multiple-universe he crashed through whirled about him—he knew that he lived!

He knew that whatever strange interior thing of his once seemingly solid body it was that lived, yet it *did live*, and was conscious and knowing, seeing and hearing and registering the endless wonder of his crashing flight through the barriers that hold the many-walled frames of the multitudinous universes together—and that whatever he was, he thought and tried to understand what was happening to him, and failed.

His "cosmic force," so ingeniously discovered and developed by his tireless labor and prying mind, had played him false! He was wrong in his theories as to what it was. He was very wrong, and characteristically he wanted to go back and do that construction work inside Mt. Falsmore all over again. But he knew that for him there would never be any going back.

AS AT LAST his velocity fell away, and the spinning confusion of wheeling stars ceased; he found himself floating comfortably, peacefully—floating in space!

This about him, this was not his sky! These stars were different, closer together, arranged in patterns and strange associations in which no familiar star remained! This sky was alien, utterly and frighteningly alien!

There were a lot more stars, they were closer together, closer to his eyes, and they were telling his striving mind that what had happened to him was not going to be understood fully by him for a long, long time.

Timeless, this being. Except for a strange bleeding sensation, a weakening, a something that drew upon his life and left it always less! Drawing away from this weakening, as naturally as one pulls the bedclothes over one in the night, Grayson found himself willing a shield of force into existence around him. A bubble, in which his new self floated, at peace, and waiting for life to begin in reality. Not that he wasn't alive, but nothing was happening! There was only himself in his bubble of strange strength, and the endless starred expanse of alien space.

CHAPTER TWO

"But ere you free the glass from all its wine
And through its crystal see a new world

shine,
Throw some to those who knew that
magic, too,
And cool the wind—the wind's their drink,
and mine."

Hafiz

ONLY himself? What was that?

Speeding past him a monstrous shape—a ship? A pursuer hard after, great and glowing, and from the sharp prow three mighty paths of force, moving inexorably together in a focus upon the first fleeing ship. As the beams converged, the ship disintegrated, and the space about Grayson's sphere of mental force became suddenly strewn with the wreckage of a vast disaster. Pieces no larger than his hand, and fragments as wide as a city block sped past him in a silent flaming death storm.

Now there were other ships, near and nearer, a fleet—nay, two fleets in deadly combat! Hour after hour the deadly game of tag went on, and Grayson found himself in the center of a storm of Titanic forces locked in combat, from which he was unable to make the slightest motion toward safer areas.

There were screens of force shimmering around each great hull, and the combatants seemed to be bending every effort to shatter or pierce the force-screens with their fiercely flashing rays. Once this shimmering screen of protection was destroyed, the rays made short work of the victim.

Grayson lay quiescent within his own mental shell of force, unthinking now of self, absorbed in watching the terrific battle, the maneuvers and technique of a vast engagement were a lesson in three dimensional chess for him, he could not tear his attention away. He felt the approach of some body, and with an effort sent his perceptions toward it—saw a small replica of the vastly larger vessels approaching.

With an effort of which he did not

know he was capable, Grayson managed to propel his shell a short distance. But the pitiful speed with which he moved was relatively negligible.

A tiny lance of gleaming force reached out from the prow of the strange, windowless vessel. His protective sphere collapsed about him like a pricked bubble.

With an effort, Grayson again set up the sphere about himself. He found that with the same effort, he was able to set the sphere in motion, he was now gliding rapidly away from the scouting vessel which had been attracted to his presence.

But too late had he found the means of propulsion. This time a round tube of shimmering something reached from the side of the vessel, and he felt the grapples of a powerful magnetism seize him, draw him like an all-powerful hand. As he approached the strange ship, a round door slid open, and through this opening his unwilling being was drawn.

Grayson stood, now unclothed of his protection, naked as Adam, shivering in the icy cold of an air-lock. Or was it an air-lock—was he breathing, or only imagining himself to be earthly matter and capable of breath? Was he seeing this material steel and flesh about him, or was he *making* it to be there in the same way he had conjured the force-sphere about his naked self in space?

Whatever the truth, his confused mind soon found safer anchorage, for a man as apparently material as his own naked self opened an inner door—stood there peering at Grayson with an expression of pure astonishment. He was speaking, but he was not moving his mouth! Grayson heard in his mind a series of unfamiliar thoughtsounds, he would have thought they were his own, but for the utter alien strangeness of their coloration and objectivity.

Grayson gathered vaguely that the man, a uniformed member of some military organization, was asking him his name and number.

As Grayson struggled to understand and answer, the man threw up his hands in a gesture of complete failure, backed out, closed the door. Grayson stood there shivering in his bare skin. Tentatively he tried conjuring some heat into existence about him—found that the place was warmer. He felt like a babe who takes the first step at the discovery that environment here responded to his mental commands. It was a fine thing to learn!

AFTER a second the soldier reappeared at the doorway, draped a great scarlet cloak about Grayson's shoulders, led him forth into the strangest surroundings he had ever dreamed could exist. This was a ship of space? It looked more like a solarium, a plant fancier's experimental greenhouse, in which some mad genius had constructed a series of elaborate mechanisms expressly designed to confuse the simple mortal who dared to trespass.

But they gave him little time to examine the weird alien surroundings. At quick step he was led forward along the green leaflined corridors, to a great cone-shaped chamber which was the nose of the ship. Here, Grayson realized, was the chief officer of the scout vessel—a vessel small only in comparison to the huge dreadnaughts locked in combat about them.

He was elderly, tall, graybearded and stern. But he seemed amused at Grayson's embarrassment in his nudity, standing there like a fugitive from the locker room clutching his cloak about him, his legs sticking out bare and hairy beneath.

Again Grayson noticed the phenomena of hearing without speech

taking place. Of the confusion of alien images arising suddenly in his mind, he gathered that again he was being asked who he was and what he did there in the midst of battle.

Carefully Grayson made a detailed mental effort to send a condensed but complete report on the incident leading up to his finding himself afloat in space. That he believed he was a stranger in a strange universe, at the mercies of an alien environment.

Grayson found himself almost understanding the commander's conversation with the officer beside him.

"Istar must hear of this. This wanderer may bear information which our technicals will find helpful. Who knows what powers a being from another space-frame might have in this universe? They must hear at once of this miracle!"

"I will communicate with Istar's flagship at once. It is true that a member of an alien race may bear strange and powerful knowledge that would aid us against the Karnians. But it will take time to learn from him, he must be intensively educated in our ways to understand our needs and his own differences, for in them will lie his strength. And we have no time!"

"There will come another day! This day's conflict will not end Azura!"

While the three stood there thus conversing, the ship had approached one of the great super-ships, slid beneath, been lifted into the vast belly of the craft. The graybearded commander himself led Grayson from the ship, along the curving corridors of the vast craft, into a sleeping room.

"Wait here, stranger. Have no fear, we mean no ill to you or anyone. We are warriors of Azura. You will learn, do not try to flee or struggle, until you know that you want to do so! That time will not come, if I am any

judge."

Grayson lay down upon the soft, shapeless bunk, and sent out his new-found perceptions. He sensed that the whole mighty fleet, numbering too many to understand how many, was in flight, retreating in order, but taking fearful punishment.

Again and again his singular far-reaching mind-sight shuddered to the impact of force beams upon the shell of shimmering strength about the mighty ship; again and again he felt the singular bubble collapse and be instantly renewed—felt the loss as if a part of his own life had been drained away. What manner of universe was this? How had he come here in truth? What would become of him?

So questioning himself, Grayson at last fell into troubled sleep.

He awoke to find the ship, in fact most of the great fleet, at rest upon a strange world. His awakener bore clothing upon his arm, and a smile upon his face.

"We are safe here on Azura, friend. Come, dress, it is time for you to be taken before our ruler."

Grayson understood his speechless thought, though with difficulty. He tried a question.

"Who is the ruler of Azura?"

"The Lord God Nardan is our glorious ruler."

Within what seemed minutes, Grayson found himself being escorted through the city.

STRANGE, spectacular beings these; riding through the streets ahead of him, beside him, and after him. A company who made Grayson, accomplished man of the world as he was, yet feel like a callow youth.

But of them all, Grayson found himself most lost in admiration of the figure of Istar, the high commander of the Azuran fleet.

Riding home as he was from a defeated fleet, to report a disastrous engagement, he yet carried himself with a high and proud and utterly capable aspect. If there had been a defeat, it was evident that it had not been caused by any lack in leadership—but from causes other than character.

To Grayson's as yet confused sight, (confused because he was unknowing what he was, matter—flesh—or some alien kind of mental illusion of flesh) Istar was a man of middle age, strong and tall and with a face carved from the milk-stone of human granite, the very heart-rock of man's (or were these fleshy apparitions truly men?) spirit of kindness and firm leadership and grim, high resolve.

These nobly clad and generously built men about him wavered now and then in Grayson's sight, and taking their places was a *different vision* of tall, grey *shapes of force*, shimmering and vibrant with vortical organized forces fluxing and pulsing within the vague, strange shapes. Then quickly the seeming alien apparition would waver again, blink out—and once more about him were shapes of flesh and blood. Yet Grayson *knew* in his heart that he himself *could not* be *himself*, for his body must have been shattered into its primal atoms in that explosion which had reft Mt. Falsmor from base to crest-crater.

Riding! It was strange that these great white horses should have been waiting to bear them along these pale, almost ghostly streets. Strange that spacemen should ride horses so well. Strange that at times the horses seemed to fade, to become another thing, vast amorphous clouds of force, weaving and fluxing inwardly, transparently, looking out of eyes that were but tunnels of glimmering force whorls, behind which one could see strange bright formations of com-

plex coloration, shifting and moving and coiling upon themselves—the brain! And then instantly his strange new seeing would vanish, and once again they were a company of defeated warriors riding home to report disaster. Flesh and blood soldiers, uniformed in blue and scarlet and gold, their weapons girt at their sides, their faces grim and weary, their eyes gloomy with foreboding of what was to come as a result of their defeat.

Between this fleeting insight which showed him that all was not as it seemed in this alien plane of life, and his natural sight of natural seeming things, there was in Grayson a conflict which he could not resolve, but which spun in his mind like whirling fire. Was this a world of matter or a *world-of-appearance-of-matter*—; where matter as he knew it *did not exist* except as a cloak over some strange other form of organization of energy into life-shapes?

Beside Grayson rode a man named Marduc. Proud of bearing, his was a character not appealing to him, Grayson decided. He looked down upon Grayson as a kind of lesser creature, but during those moments of maddening insight, (or was it mere lucidity) when Grayson's eyes suddenly peered out upon a world completely unfamiliar, this man beside him appeared as a cloud of blackness, wrapping about him a cloak of gold beneath which Grayson could see an evil, crawlingly different interior! This sight of the man's inner self, gave Grayson the idea that perhaps the others, the natives here, did not have this strange *weakness* of his, to see what was *solid* suddenly become about them something transparent and deeply *divergent* from familiar nature. Or was the weakness strength?

MARDUC, a black-haired man of powerful build, with a sharp

blue eye, took advantage of the ride to question Grayson.

"You say you are a man of another world and universe? How can that be? No man has ever traveled beyond our universe?"

"I don't know how it can be. I only know this life of yours is an unfamiliar one to me."

"More likely you are a spy of the Karnians! Such a flimsy lie will never get you by our intelligence. Better think up a better."

"What makes you think I am a spy?" Grayson was nettled, and something about the man gave him suspicion. For the words, shaped as they were in thought-flow into his inner mind, were subtly different from the Azurans, and the sharp blue eye he bent upon Grayson as he said these words of advice and scorn, had in them a *seeking after some sign*, he was looking for Grayson to say something which Grayson had no intention of saying! He wanted Grayson to *admit* he was a spy! Strange! As if he were warning him!

"What else *could* you be? There were only men of the Karnian fleet there in the void, and other life light years away! You are not one of our men, hence you must be one of theirs, making up a fancy explanation for your presence. It is too obvious! I would advise you to amend your story."

"Do you have such concern over the safety of Karnian spies, then?"

"Well, man, you will be extinguished! Better admit you survived the wreck of a Karnian ship. Your wild tale will never be believed!"

"Thanks, Mr. Marduc," murmured Grayson aloud, though Marduc did not seem to notice anything different in Grayson's speech. Abruptly Grayson's wavering vision shifted to the strange way of seeing, and remained there. For a moment he was lost, then he began to adjust to the

parent wavering forces where his eyes had seen matter but moments before.

"You needn't thank me, man! I'm only doing my duty. I have no affection for Karnians. If you're a spy, better for me to find it out before the intelligence gets hold of you. They will be sure—we were fools enough to swallow your cock and bull story."

"Well, you needn't bother yourself with me, great Marduc. I have no idea what your rank, or give a damn. But if you think I am a Karnian, why don't you talk to your fellow officers about it?"

The black wavering interior of the tall insubstantiality that Marduc had become suddenly was shot with firegleamings, and Grayson drew back from beside the figure. Unknowing Grayson's seeing of his inner passion, Marduc said:

"Proud talk for one about to be blasted out of life as a liar and a spy!"

"Overbearing and rash talk you give vent to, Marduc. I would prefer silence from you. If I were not a stranger to your customs, I would take such offense as you would be sorry you had aroused!"

As suddenly as it had come, Grayson's vision reverted to the seeing of normal flesh about him, shaped though it was in unfamiliar guise, except for the fact that these were men, with four limbs—every other detail was strange and wildly variant from his experience. This beast between his legs, not truly horse,—but some strange fiery beast of similar appearance, with great bulging eyes, a round domed forehead, white smooth hide and flowing muscles, too broad of chest and short of spine to be a true horse!

Anger boiling in him at the strange tone and over-bearing actions of this Marduc, Grayson suddenly urged the beast ahead, riding quickly past the

others, to take his place behind the broad back of the leader, Istar. Though the others cast sharp thoughts at him, he paid no attention, continued to ride directly behind the great black steed of the Commander. He had no desire for more of the company of the rude officer, whatever he meant by his words. If Grayson had only realized fully what was in Marduc's mind, it would have saved him much future trouble.

NOW THE cavalcade rode beneath a dome of crystal, shutting out the pale light of the sunless sky—a gray, clear light it was—and the sky was a gray clear infinity which his new way of seeing sensed reaching on and on. The crystal overhead lent a pleasant greenness to the light, and along the strangely silent roadway columns of trees marched beside them, trees that were not trees but great carven red crystal trunks with spreading, too-graceful branches upon which shimmered and turned leaves that were themselves crystalline, chiming in soft muted little sounds as they touched and turned.

Along the overhead ways moved shapes now familiar to Grayson as the true people behind the seeming flesh which his eyes persisted in seeing. Shapes that walked along ways arching from pale shimmering wall of glass-like matter to rosy pale wall of adjoining building. Or now and then a shape that floated free of all gravitational attraction, thistledown lifting of its own volition, floating to see the warriors below, or swiftly hastening on some incomprehensible errand.

Then they were dismounting in the great courtyard of a ruler's house of houses. Small laughing boys took the reins they dropped, led the snorting, rearing steeds away with a boisterous swift haste that was a strangely silent

boisterousness. Grayson could not get used to the fact that sound was here replaced by another sense, which had none of the familiar extraneous impacts of noise, but only meaning or nothing at all.

His flashes of seeing normal life-shapes and then again seeing strange transparent ghost shapes of alien matter were coming more and more closely, so that alternately he was sure of solid matter about him and next moment afraid to move for fear of sinking into the pale translucent soil beneath his feet, immaterial as cloud surface. Which was the true vision, and which some affliction due to his transition from his universe to an alien one?

'Multiple-universe frame' mused Grayson, following the proud steps of Istar into the wide-thrown doors of the ornate palace. His flash of seeing inside and through things came this time as if in answer to his will to see what Istar was feeling, and Grayson was struck with sympathy at the sadness and sting of defeat mingled through the noble emotion-matrix of this strong-fibred man. Sadness at the loss of thousands of his crew-men in the fleet. The sting of inability to outwit and out-maneuver his opponent. A dull, hurt wonder that the enemy seemed to know his every plan and trick before he used it. A suspicion that some one on their side had given the enemy vital information, and a casting about in his mind, mulling over this man and that of his officers who had vital information in their possession—wondering which was the traitor. Who had told the enemy their thought-pattern formulas? Such intricate information to convey to them, how had it been done?

Abruptly the inner seeing left him, and again the strange world had taken on a more normal appearance. This

time Grayson knew that his odd new power of penetrative vision and mental seeing was not the possession of the others about him, but that the sight which seemed more normal to him was to them the usual and accepted thought-frame of their world. Something in his transposition had left him with a power of mind not possessed by these natives of this amazing new universe!

EVEN YET he was not sure that his more normal sight was not in truth an illusion produced by his own mind's thought habits attempting to convince him that this world was like his other—was normal to his other world's ways and laws, operative with the same physical order, possessing the same elements. That seeing flesh-and-blood men where he knew were only phantasmal force-beings—was in truth a protective functional illusion fostered by his sub-conscious mind to keep him from insanity. That in truth this universe was one of force;—a fluid, differently-organized matter existed here, and that his mind *refused to recognize* the fact and substituted instead this *illusion* of solidity and ordinary reality through which he walked as a blind man through a garden of jewels, refusing their existence even as his other senses told him of the wonder about him.

But within Istar's mind was a *similar set-up of apparent reality!* He had seen the thought-pictures of his thought forming and dissolving, he *knew* that Istar thought of himself as a four-limbed being and *not* any shimmering, weird organization of fluid force-vortices! *Could it be that both sights were as true* as anything could be true? Could it be that *here* he could see what *they could not*? Could see the *inner, greater reality of life* even as these natives accept the superficial, apparent reality as

all of reality?

If he could control the coming and the going of this new power—then he would have, even here in his helpless disorientation, a hidden advantage over these people, a protection against their natural enmity to the stranger!

Grayson resolved to learn to control this new thought power. And even as he so resolved, he remembered the mind of Istar busy with immensely complex designs he called "thought-pattern formulas", and the plans for new "menta-beam" projectors—and he did not even understand what the man was thinking about though he could see the thought in detailed clarity.

The group of men with Istar numbered around fifteen, of whom Grayson made one. They passed through a number of wide halls, crossed great chambers of brilliantly tinted glass-like walls. The swimming, scented, misty air was a caress here within this haven. The details of the place escaped Grayson, they were too varied and too different from his experience, no man could absorb the myriad art details of this master work!—It would have been like learning chess at one sitting to have taken in all the little delicate subtle scrollings depicting alien beauty upon the walls, the door lintels; the very floor itself swam with the shimmering carvings overlaid with transparent material tinted delicately to life-like color made to *move* by subtly varied changing light rays from an undetectable source!—Or did they move *alive*?

They stood at last before a throne:—The majesty and power of an empire of space, an empire that had stood for a time uncountable in Grayson's earth-thought symbols, was here displayed in the trappings of that throne. Displayed too in the breeding of that Monarch, upon that

throne, a breeding self-evident and redolent of of an antiquity of descent unthinkable, and antiquity of line of which no member had been less than noble, less than regal, less than adequate. He fit, sitting in that throne. Whatever admiration Grayson had felt for Istar, the leader born and cultured and bred up to his job; was lost now in admiration for his Lord upon that throne.

How could such life exist upon the plane in which such as Marduc moved *unseen* and *unapprehended* as a *natural enemy*? Or was this an illusion bred of some magic, and this Ruler but an ordinary man? Grayson reserved judgment, fought off the awe and admiration that swept him at the regal dignity of the mighty man-form on the great throne of smooth black stone. A throne shaped in the form of a gigantic black flower of four petals, one petal the seat—two the curved arms, and one the great round back outlining the mighty head and shoulders of the monarch.

HE WAS big, with fine muscular development and incongruously pallid face and white hands restless upon the incurving round petals of stone. Two great burning eyes above a nose high-bridged and thin-nostriled. A broad expanse of too-white brow above which a mass of brown curls lay unruly, close cropped about the hidden ears. Metal links covered the sinewed arms and wide, warrior shoulders; and about his waist a wide belt, the only ornament, set with round gold bosses. In the belt was thrust a weapon strange to Grayson, as what was not here? It was a curved handle built to fit the hand, with finger grips incut, and on the thing gleamed a red ruby. Like a red eye the big ruby glowed as the only spot of color in the black and white of firm-muscled flesh and dull metal and

black stone. The rest of the weapon curved down like a scimitar. But it was no scimitar, for the end of it was a bell-mouth in which some power lay chained, giving off a dim flickering threat in little gleaming moving lights of a blue intensity.

The wide generous mouth of the ruler did not smile on the defeated space admiral, did not pick out any face for favor, but only looked down on them silently, grimly, and with a sorrow as if they had betrayed him, these men whom he had loved. It was a thing to hurt the heart of any loyal man, that face of the monarch looking down on his returned warriors; a thing Grayson himself could not face, but turned his eyes away as did the others, from the hurt in those great eyes.

Istar stepped to the first wide round step that led up to the dais, and put one foot upon it, and leaned upon his knee with one wide hand, and looked up into the great hurt eyes.

"I feel betrayed myself, Lord Nardan. Azura falls unless we catch us a traitor and learn a new way of war within two *fals*. They had every formula before I used it, I pierced not one force-shield, they pierced each one soon after they ranged us! We have an enemy among our trusted officers! Who can it be, Monarch who must learn or be trod beneath Gyron's heel?"

Behind Grayson, Marduc pressed suddenly forward, turned and pointed finger at Grayson, speaking rapidly and he thought with an intent to turn the talk at once away from any search for traitors.

"We have brought with us another spy, one who claims he is *from another universe*! This one at least we can dispose of before he gets an opportunity to do us harm."

The monarch turned those deep eyes beneath the broad bony brows

upon Grayson, and for a long minute there was a silence.

"Who are you, stranger?" asked the man on the throne.

Grayson moved from among the men ringing the throne, and his voice rang strangely as he forgot the way of projecting fluid thought-force which was here the speech. Then he caught himself, and formed the images of his tale slowly and carefully, explaining fully,—

"I am Paul Grayson, a research scientist and inventor upon a world of another universe, I think. I discovered a new and terrific source of power, and in trying to harness that power, blew my body into space. It was picked up by your fleet, and that is all that I can tell you. I do not know where I am, or even how to tell you where I come from."

THE GREAT eyes shifted to Marduc, and at once Marduc said: "In all that battlefield of space, there were only men of Karnia and men of Azura. For ten sares in all directions space was empty of craft except our two fleets. He is not of our Azura, and he admits it! He *must* be of the enemy, a liar and a spy!"

The great lips of the big man on the throne smiled at this, and the strong white teeth parted as the smile became a chuckle. "If he knew our customs, would you be so bold as to chance his wrath, my brave Marduc? It seems to me you forget we have perceptors to know if he is in truth of Karnia or not. Why are you so anxious to accuse this stranger? No spy would depend upon such a wild tale for his life. I would give him time to prove himself."

The grave, proud face of Istar gave out a golden flow of approbation, and Grayson knew his life had been spared, and Marduc rebuked. The man stepped back, his face a mask of unreadable emotion barely controlled.

Istar's meaning-flow became English words in Grayson's mind:

"He has no guilt sense, no apparent realization of the nature of this universe. I have looked into him and found strange things, strange unreadable thoughts. He had great difficulty in understanding me at first, now he has learned our way of speech more quickly than seems possible. He is either a very intelligent man or a man with strange powers, and if he is a spy he is a brand of scoundrel to me before unmet in life."

The Monarch nodded, his smile gone now, and he beckoned with one hand toward the shadows that half hid the wide reaches of the vast chamber. From the near shadows stepped a form that brought a gasp to Grayson's lips, and again he was startled by his own voice in the eerie silence which was this world's atmosphere.

For a beautiful young Goddess of a girl had stepped forward to answer the ruler's beckoning hand, and bowed her head meekly before the giant male on the throne. She stood there like an angel, her hair a golden glory about her shoulders, an air of innocence and youth mingled with profound depth lay upon her an aura of virginity and studious repression of natural desire for the sake of advancement— Here was an ambitious child who had reasons for her ambition and a will to suit. Her gown was a pale gold transparence upon the white flesh, floating about her slender form; and as she raised her head Grayson knew that he knew nothing of this world! For a mystery lay in her eyes, smiled upon her curving, well carved lips, dimpled her cheek. A mystery of character beyond him!

Yes, *Lord of Azura, God of the reaches of Nether, agent of the light, I come to obey.*"

"Take this maligned 'spy' and ascertain if he can be of value to us within two fols. Unless we discover a new weapon and a traitor within that time, we will all be ground beneath Karnian cruelty. If he proves to be a spy as Marduc hastened to assume, have him slain. If he be a scientist of another universe, as he maintains, why his mind will contain many alien concepts of energy forms which we may construct even here, by our massed thought projection into pseudo-materiality, just as we do the weapons and tools of the lower Azura planets of material life. Learn from him what you can, and above all study how to use his differences of warfare concept to suggest a new weapon against the Karnian horde. Tell no one, if you learn from him anything of use, keep it for my ears alone."

This speech of Lord Nardan's was couched in mental pictures hard for Grayson to follow, particularly his mention of a Lower Azura, and the use of material weapons in this the Higher Azura. Then these people recognized their immaterial nature, and yet at the same time it seemed to Grayson they did not fully realize it, but were deluded as he was himself by the seeming materiality of themselves and their works about them.

WITHOUT answering, the girl turned to Grayson, measuring his lean alien face; the slender, strangely strong body; the deep grey eyes that looked on her fascinated by her cold bright beauty, yet repelled by the virginal, repressed way of her will. Her hand touched a peculiar crystalline object suspended from her waist, it hung there on a gold chain, glittering and turning, with chained fires within it pulsing, half alive. To Grayson it seemed that she relied upon the object to frighten him, for protection for herself against any

harm he might plan to do her. He knew from the short abrupt thoughts she threw at him that she considered herself able to handle a spy if he proved so to be, and was warning him in case he planned any subterfuge.

She turned back to the Lord Nardan, and her thought flashed proud and bright, almost visible to his eyes.

"I will perceive, Majesty. I will inform. And I will make haste, for I do not like Karnian men nor wish for slavery to them."

Nardan looked into the cold bright eyes of the girl for a long second, as if measuring the depth and the strength of her with a sensation of pleasure such as a warrior who touches a bright and well balanced weapon.

She touched Grayson upon the shoulder, pointing to the door at the side. He moved off, loath to leave the conference about the throne. But even as he moved away, the Monarch rose, and several officers followed him to another door set in the dark wall behind the throne.

"What is your name, golden maid?" Grayson asked impulsively.

"I am called Sareen, a subordinate of the intelligence staff of the Lord Nardan. And what are you called?"

"Paul Grayson. You can call me Paul, since we are to be together. I am a stranger to your customs, so you must forgive me if I offend what you consider polite niceties of your life."

"I will forgive, Paul. Do you likewise for me," she answered, unsmiling, grave.

"If I knew whether your science here was similar to my own, we would have a common ground, Sareen. But this world of yours, I am not sure I can see it in truth. There is a changing about my sight and one minute I see seeming solidity and real men's bodies, and the next, I see inner forces of life, a vague whirl-

ing mist-force body instead of matter!"

At his meaning-flow of complaint upon the strange affliction of double-sight, she stopped suddenly, putting out a hand to the transparent wall to support her, as if he had startled her off her balance.

"You can see the *inner forces*? Without artificial aid, you can see the *flux of vi-flow* within even my body?"

"I do not know *what* I see, but at times I see strange mist-shapes of vortical force instead of flesh and blood, and the very ground melts into insubstantial mist..."

"I am naked! Before you I am seen! This...this is unprecedented!"

Her face became suffused with a deep blush of sudden embarrassment. What she meant by being "naked," Grayson half, knew. For what was revealed to him in his moments of strange sight, he knew was really inner-force even as she had said. And the seeing *did* reveal much of a person's nature, he was swiftly realizing. And naked beauty of a new and to him vastly more revealing naked beauty than any nudity.

"It is only at times that this seeing comes on me. At other times all seems normal!"

"Promise me you will turn away your perception from my soul when it is revealed! I am an unwed maiden, *this cannot be!*"

"I will try not to pry, Sareen. But you are very beautiful, and I am very weak!"

"If you had told the Lord this, I would not be *exposed* to your alien eyes!"

"He would have given me a male tutor, I gather?"

"Of course," cried Sareen, "Do you think he would have so exposed me?"

Grayson said. "But why does this power disturb you so? I do not under-

stand."

"We can have such seeing only by the use of delicate instruments, materialized by our specialists with great effort. Perceptors see with their use, and then only vaguely, not with real clarity. You are an *exceptional* being, to have such sight! Have you other powers?"

"I do not know, Sareen. Remember I am a stranger to your world. I have not had time to know what I may be compared to you. If you could see me as I do you, you could learn my differences, know more of my powers. Had you not better use the instruments you speak of?"

"I had not thought to use such prying devices unless you showed intents that aroused suspicion. It is not among us considered right to look into the under-forces of life in those about us. It is—indecent!" I do such work only officially, one must be virgin, and keep the mind above sin, to be allowed to do this work."

"Oh! I am sorry that I told you of this, then. Yet, I give you permission to so look upon me, turn about is fair play, you know!"

"I will not reveal it! It will be *our* secret, until I know more of you and your mind. Come, we must hasten, there is so little time. But that you reveal this power does much to confirm your integrity in my eyes. I will not fear your eyes, Paul."

SHE HAD made a difficult decision, Grayson knew. She must stay by his side, knowing that to him every inner truth of her was exposed, while to her eyes he himself was an almost opaque mystery. Grayson was vastly amused at her maiden embarrassment, but if he had known truly what her decision implied, her own future being now in his hands, he would not have been amused, but full of admiration for her courage, and her solicitude for himself, a stranger.

Even as Grayson puzzled about Sareen considering herself *naked* because he could sometimes see *through* her—thinking that perhaps the solidity of this world was an illusion engendered by a kind of mutual agreement not to see *too much*:—implied by her words—a mutual agreement which with the passage of time had become a physical trait in a world where truth of seeing responded to the will itself if one knew how...

Marduc came striding up to them, and disregarding Grayson's presence, seized Sareen by the hand.

"You must give me an answer, Sareen, there is little time! Within two fads the Karnian fleet will be upon us! I have arranged a place of safety to which to send you, and afterward I will come for you. We can go to other, safer worlds, then! There will be for us no need to live here as serfs of Gyron."

Sareen blazed angrily at the ruddy face of the man who towered above her.

"I? Desert my Lord in his extremity! What do you think me, Marduc. If you have a place of safety, why not reserve it for Lord Nardan?"

"He will never escape! But I have planned it carefully. No one must know but you and I."

He was couching his words in unfamiliar variants of flow, but Grayson understood him well enough. It was evident he did not think Grayson could follow their words. Grayson apprised him of his mistake.

"And I, Marduc? I do not like you, you know. *I have reason to dislike you!*"

Marduc turned upon Grayson. Half a head taller, he thrust out a big hand to grip him, as if to bend him to his will. But Grayson pushed the hand aside easily, wondering at the intense angry strength in his own arm. Marduc's face was filled with passion,

with worry, with an anxiety Grayson did not understand.

"You fool, if you put your meddling enemy hands into my business I'll kill you like I'd crush a flea," gritted the big officer.

Grayson willed to see what moved behind the mask of flesh, and his vision flashed with blinding quickness into the eery range of his strange sight. A tall pillar of black and grey whorls of mist took the place of the uniformed muscular body of Marduc, within that mist a fiery whirl of sparkling passion thrust through with lances of yellow fear, yellow fear barred with black quivering bars of force-stasis—and over it all a shell of grey will-force, and here and there in the greyness little tattered places where some unknown wound had marred his other self. A twisted writhing core inside all this, burned a flame of red evil, the spine of force about which other living forces revolved!—

Grayson saw that the clean, pink whorls of vibrant beauty that were Sareen were shot too, with thin bars of stasis-fear, and that the inner center of her was bright gold, shimmering and turning speckled over with pure emeralds of sensory centers, and that the touch of this Marduc was causing an angry red irritation to grow upon her arm. With his own strange strength Grayson reached out and struck the polluting arm of force away, sent Marduc spinning half a dozen feet away, and as suddenly as he had willed his new vision, it passed.

THE SOLID world again in place, Grayson saw that Sareen was staring at him with divine wide-eyed gratitude, while Marduc leaned against the wall some distance away, staring at his arm which stuck out of a coat the whole arm of which had

burnt away, leaving the arm bare and scorched! Marduc's eyes were upon Grayson's with awe and anger struggling in them, and Grayson smiled to see the ignorant anger and pride of him, that thought even yet to kill him. Why, he had only to thrust his other-arm of force into the center of him and pluck out the center fire to extinguish him completely! Or was he wrong about his strength? Strange, this power!

Marduc found his voice. "God or devil, I mean to have your life, alien!"

With these words, the man turned and stumbled away, badly hurt by the look of him. Sareen put out a small sweet hand to touch Grayson's sleeve.

"What strange powers you have! You must remember such inadvertent acts precisely, how you can create such force is beyond my understanding. We of Azura do not have destructive force inherent to such an extent. Your transposition into our space must have been such as to bring you from a relatively more dense and energy-packed world, you exhibit powers unknown here!"

"I am glad I could help you. That man is never to touch you again. Sareen, there is an evil in him that soils, inures your inner life."

"You can see that in him? I have often wondered why I detest him? He pursues me, swears undying love for me, wants me to go away with him to some place he has prepared—I cannot get rid of him! But he is well considered, he has a position of great trust."

"You will get rid of him! I will have to kill him, or he will kill me. Do not trust him in any way."

"I wonder, Paul, if this Marduc is not the traitor the Ruler has asked me to find, perhaps with your help. It is someone who has access to the records of the fleet, and Marduc is high in the officers councils. I must

find out what chance he would have to betray us. Oh, I wonder!"

"He could be a traitor, if paid well enough. Why not?"

CHAPTER THREE

*"Each I is the center of all the world
For each I the sun comes up.
And each of us think we're the only drink
Time's hand shall ever sup."*

Grayson of Azura

THE WAR swept daily closer. Fear grew visibly in Azura. Daily Grayson studied with Sareen, and of their closeness something fine and cherished was born and grew between them, Sareen of Azura and Paul Grayson of another plane of life.

Learning the intricacies of such things as menta-beam projectors, which can be adjusted through vast numbers of pattern variations, and used to pierce the force shells set up about the enemy's ships, or to blast the minds of the warriors within with powerful flows of thought patterned to cause a paralyzing, brain-dissolving rush of force-flows through the functional centers.

He learned from her swiftly the complex details of a totally new mental science based upon conditions of force and energy-stasis and flux which was new to him. He suspected that these conditions of energy were such as did not even exist in his own universe.

But nowhere in what he learned did he hit on any clue to improving their battle technique in time to meet the gathering fleets drawn from all the worlds of the Karnian Empire.

The Karnians had been growing for centuries, recruiting the outcasts and criminals and malcontents, until at last they thought they had such great power they could overcome any possible resistance.

Once, Grayson learned, these Karnians had been but a small piratical

people upon a world untouched by civilized people. They had begun to recruit rapidly, spreading an attractive propaganda of much reward for little effort. And as long as their steadily successful conquests kept on, they could pay well, and there was little loss or casualties among their warriors.

So Grayson's Earthian thought pictured the account of Karnia.

But when he looked at Sareen and willed his new vision into use, he got a different picture of her story of the Karnian forces. And a different picture of what Azura really was.

He got a picture of a *series* of Azuras, of which this Azura was but one. The lower Azuras produced a lower form of force-being, which ascended then after much schooling, into the higher Azura, there to repeat and so ascend again. Unless it so happened that the force-center of their inner, mysterious energy-being became contaminated with the eerie red fire of evil. Then they were cast out of the world of Azura, to become wanderers in space, and it was these creatures who made up the original Karnian force.

With his strange new vision, Grayson got an immense picture of universe-of-life packed within universe-of-life, graduating from form to form and frame to frame with bewildering intricacies of gradation!—And all of of this *unconsciously* to those who did not have the power of inner vision. It was quite clear that Azura was a "good" empire filled with immortal creatures of force, who carried about an illusion of solidity perhaps *unconscious* and *inherent*, and perhaps *only seemingly so*. For Grayson could not accept that these people in their own familiar world did not *know* more about it than he, the newcomer, had already learned.

He saw that Karnia was an evil power, made up of creatures cast out by the natural process of selection—but how did the inhabitants select and cast out and accept *if they did not have the power of vision* which Grayson found he possessed?

Then he learned from Sareen that at regular intervals were examinations, during which instruments were used by elected judges, supervised by the hereditary Monarch. These instruments revealed the inner infection of evil, and determined the fitness of the contestants to remain as citizens or be cast out into exile. Grayson came inescapably to the conclusion that here was a world of strange beings *unconscious* of what they were, who thought of themselves as men and women—but were not truly so at all. Were instead quite another thing—and Grayson was forced into may strange avenues of thought by the Azuran ignorance of the inner life-force. Was his own world one of the steps in the Azuran chain of world-schools, where the force-beings lived through a similar illusory life-time, unknowing their true nature, but believing that the material illusion of life was the whole of life?

GRAYSON at times glimpsed the order behind the seeming confusion caused by this illusion of materiality in which the people of Azura lived, glimpsed an immense system of selection of immortal beings of fluid force in which an illusion of mortality was necessary to keep the business of selection and rejection fair and above-board and equal. Else, had they known they were being tried in a rigid school of natural selection, they would have found ways of circumventing the system, of hiding their deficiencies—and the purity of the upper Azuran world of graduates

would have in time become alloyed with beings who had learned to hide the infection of evil, *livid upon their core-matrix!*

But these speculations upon the mysteries of the Azuran planets of life were of necessity sketchy and to Grayson valueless—for he was himself immersed in the seemingly *material* machinery of their life, busily preparing to fight off the gathering storm. For the Karnians, confident of final victory, were gathering every unit of their forces in one great fleet for a final devastating blow upon the very center of their chief opponent—upon Azura itself. And Grayson saw that when Azura fell, all organized resistance to the Karnian system of non-selective material life would perish, and the great hidden plan behind the Azuran system of selection would be destroyed!

But to the ordinary Azuran mind, they were a *single* planet, the head of an Empire of some score of small worlds, faced with a mighty enemy whom they were unable to defeat in battle. They did not see the system behind their Empire, did not know that they were anything more than mortal men!

They did not *know* they themselves were good, and that the Karnians were evil with an inner fire of destruction eating at their core of energy, did not *know* that they were part of a system of selection designed to overcome a spreading energy-infection which was destroying the inner fibre of their race! Who was *behind* the creation of this master-plan to fight a singular unseen disease of energy? Sometimes Grayson was awed by this insight of his, at other times inclined to disbelieve the evidence of his own senses!

At other times he looked upon the mighty body of the singular person-

age known to them as Nardan, Lord of Azura, God of the Nether Reaches, agent of the Light—with a vast awe, for he saw that this man was *not a man*, but an immortal being who had masqueraded for endless centuries as a mortal man for the sake of overcoming that strange disease of red fire which Grayson had glimpsed writhing at the core of Marduc, and here and there within others of Azura, though there were but few. Grayson wondered why, if Nardan was in truth the agent behind this immense plan, he did not see the evil in Marduc and dispose of him? And it occurred to Grayson that Nardan, in taking on the illusion of flesh and material existence for such a long time, might have lost the power of insight, if he had once had it. That Nardan still hoped to save the inner being of Marduc never occurred to Grayson, it did not make sense. One would not endanger an Empire of millions for the sake of one individual.

SO IMMERSED in puzzling speculations as he attempted to orientate himself in a world no part of which behaved in a familiar way or was responsive to natural law as he knew it; Grayson yet spent his time busily studying under the sweet tutelage of Sareen. And with every drop of water in the big water-clock, Grayson knew the destruction of this mysteriously beautiful and fascinatingly intricate life-system came that much nearer.

Sareen was fascinated not by such speculative puzzles. "I am drawn to you, Paul, by the strange lights in your eyes, the terrible strength of your arm, the quick active mind always striding ahead of my own. I do not have your insight, Paul. But it is very sweet to know you are able to look into my soul, to know that from

you I have no secrets, nor need any. I have no wish to hide my virgin soul from you, and to me that is very new and good. Since I cannot conceal my affection from you, I revel in the new freedom of love that this fact gives me!"

"We are searching for a force, a weapon, a thought-pattern from which Karnia cannot defend themselves, Sareen. Sweet as it is to me to see your inner self and know that you have almost a mate's love for me, still we cannot stop our work to talk about it."

"I am not a man, I cannot keep forever plugging like you!"

"Still, we must, Sareen, until you and your people are free of the threat of war, free to love. Then we will see..." and Paul sent her a look that staggered her with its intensity.

"We are not unconscious of the system of gradations of life in the energies you see, Paul. We do *know* of these things, and know them very well. But we grow so used to the solid sight, that we sometimes forget, this it is that misleads you. We *know*, and many among us can will the true sight-power just as you. But when you exposed the burning intensity of inner fire, the soul-strength that flung Marduc away and nearly destroyed his arm—then you displayed powers that are really unusual and new among us. Then I knew truly you were no spy! For that power could be used in battle, introduced into a menta-beam weapon, such a thought-pattern would destroy all opposition!"

"We have been searching for a weapon against Karnia, Sareen, and overlooking that strange incident. Perhaps it is the answer..."

"I have *not* overlooked it my friend, Paul. You are always underestimating me in your thoughts. You have so much to learn, that I have

not told you what I plan. If we find nothing else, you will accompany the fleet when we take to space in the last attempt to fight off the conquering Karnians. But up to the last moment, no one will know what is planned. Thus the spy will be unable to convey the data on the thought-patterns to the enemy, for they will not be written down in symbols! They exist only in your brain, a strange new brain among us. You yourself cannot betray this secret for you do not know your power or the symbols to express synthetic generation of the force you alone can generate. See, I am clever, and you think me a simple girl."

"Perhaps not, Sareen. I understand my own thoughtlessness not to see what you plan. Yes, it would be a lost secret if any other knew it. But does not Marduc know? I used the force upon him!"

"He will not know the symbols! See, he cannot send it to the enemy, even if he wanted to!"

"So we do not even think about it till the time comes."

"That's right. We pretend to be very busy looking for such a thing, when all the time we are just enjoying ourselves."

"You do enjoy my company, Sareen?"

"You have only to look at my heart, you know. Have you never ventured, Paul?"

"You asked me not to pry, Sareen."

Sareen gave a little exclamation of pique. "Must you be so honorable as to take even a peek? I withdraw the request, for one minute!"

GRAYSON willed his sight to the other range, and Sareen changed bewilderingly from the pink and gold and while lily of Azura to the strange whirling pillar of emerald-gemmed golden force, within which Grayson

discovered a changing picture from that which he had glimpsed of her before. Within her breast a strange flowering of new energies had sprung into life, was sending through all that intricately organized golden soul of hers little threads of pure glowing rose and blue, root-fibres of some strange new life within her! A softness and a new sensitivity was in her, the emerald sensory focus-points were changed and larger; there was an aura of ecstatic waiting for some expected miracle of...

Grayson switched back to plain seeing again. He looked soberly down upon the golden head of Sareen, bowed demurely, her face half-hidden from him, her cheeks rosy with shy sweet knowing what he had seen.

"Sareen! I had not thought that you could have discovered love so quickly! Are you sure? How can this be?"

"You have seen, Grayson. Oh, Paul, how can a living being help it? Can't you see it growing, spreading all through me? It will choke me to death if you do not see! What can a woman do with love? It possesses me!"

Grayson took the bowed head, raised it, looked into the eyes that were no longer shy pools of veiled blue, but were now liquid and large with emotion. Eyes that said a world of unspeakable intensities of truth to him, and for a moment he was abashed before the mystery of this love, afraid that he himself lacked the ability to produce the complementaries to the forces growing within her. Feared himself inadequate to be to her what her nature needed so very much.

But she did not turn away, held her face waiting for him, radiant and expectant. As he bent to kiss her, her arms went about him, taut with sudden strength. It was then

that Grayson learned why all these inhabitants really knew the inner secrets of their stranger world, for the strange seeing came involuntarily upon him with new and dizzying vortical force! An ecstatic mingling of their fluid force-bodies took place, Grayson saw that this world contained a way of love impossible to wholly material mortals—for their bodies mingled and became one, the strange grey stasis-bars of his own body moved from his material body to space themselves between the stretching oval emeralds of Sareen's beautiful inner-sensory body. The glowing rose-and-blue of her love swept all through his own grey and gold and a shimmering violet force grew, birthed of that mingling. A new organizational shifting of his inner being took place. Between them rose a new center, a new focus, a single similar core in each of them. Each of them changed, not subtly, but terrifically new and vital growth changes, so that they were each now different people than before. And Grayson realized that the intensifying of his own perceptions during this "kiss" must take place in all such experiences here, so that at such times all Azurans must become conscious of their inner being.

As he straightened from the strange ideally ecstatic embrace, Grayson knew that never again would he feel nostalgia for his home world. Such rapturous mingling of being had been totally unexpected by him, and Sareen was radiant with realized expectation.

"It changes everything for me, Paul. The very cores of us have touched and mingled, left a little of us in each other! We will never be the same again, or content without each other!"

"I know that, Sareen. I did not know before. I am sorry I was so

slow to understand."

"Tonight there is a celebration, a send-off for our warriors, when those who must perhaps die have their last opportunity to enjoy life. There you will take me. I will not remain away from such pleasures now! It may be the last time that any Azurans can enjoy anything. Within short hours the enemy will be upon us."

SAREEN HAD miraculously blossomed from the reserved spirit of maidenhood into the lovely new Sareen-in-love-with-Grayson. Sareen, leaning upon his arm, guiding his steps in the intricate "Dance of the Coatin," which means betrothal. Gliding past the glowering Marduc, standing among the many who watched, Grayson sensed on his masklike ruddy face, stiff and emotionless, an aura of menace. Notwithstanding his efforts to conceal it, Grayson knew Marduc intended to try to kill him very soon. But he did not realize *how* soon.

There were other puzzling living beings at that dance. Grayson decided that these Azurans were not ignorant of their true existence as beings of energy, for when his sight switched over to the new sight, there were among them certain rosy colored lovely shapes which became conscious of his regard upon them. Trying to read their thoughts, Grayson found his vision of their inner selves blocked by a subtle resistance making them opaque. He gathered these were immortal monitors, or were supposed to be immortal monitors, of ancient being, wise and experienced in life. That they were powerless to aid or harm, held there merely to observe. The parallel between their present truth and his early teachings struck him. He wondered if there were not further par-

allels. Such as that—the Azurans had no material existence at all—but only an illusion of materiality brought over from their beginnings upon a material world? That all this seemingly material world of flesh and blood and metal and ships—was in truth but an omnipresent illusion of these energy beings' earthly trained brains, from their first life upon what they called Azura the Lower. He had heard them speak of this "lower plane", and it was getting clearer to him. If that was true, then there were things he knew about this world that they themselves did not "KNOW", else they would use the powers he saw it gave them. For instance they thought they had to build material ships—and man them with real life—send them out to die in a war against beings who did not know their true nature either! Was it true that Azurans knew the laws of their world or had only brought over from lower Azura an illusion of material laws? Grayson decided to try an experiment—he would tell an Azuran something was there that was not there, and see if they saw it!

Glancing again at the rosy-figured energy beings whom he had seen with his new sight, now that his vision had decided to conform to the Azurans' standard way of seeing, he noticed that these beings were invisible, could only be detected by him as a slight rosy haze! He knew that to the ordinary Azuran they were not present at all. He murmured to Sareen—

"Over there is a strange man or woman clad all in red! How odd a creature. That is no native Azuran!"

Sareen glanced where Grayson pointed, and cried—"Why there is a man who is no Azuran! G.ayson, he is—very strange indeed! He's gone. He saw me watching him, and threw up an arm—and disappeared!

For an instant I saw him, then he caused himself to disappear! What does it mean, is he an invisible enemy among us?"

Grayson smiled. "I think not, for I have noticed them around since I first came, and none of them have seemed to be enemies. They are monitors from the next plane, sent to aid Azurans remain free of the fiery infection that consumes the Karnians."

Sareen frowned on him whimsically. "You know so much with those other-world eyes of yours. More than I do myself about my own land. It isn't fair!"

"Sareen, when you glimpsed that being, did he seem material, like other Azurans?"

"Why yes, Paul, quite material. Why do you ask?"

Disregarding her question and the nearby glowering Marduc, Grayson asked her: "Is it inevitable that the Karnians will attack Azura? How can they be certain of defeating so powerful a state? Just because they have won a battle or so does not necessarily mean that all is lost!"

"It does mean that, because they seem to have obtained all of our military secrets, and constructed counters for them which we in turn have been unable to learn about in time. Only some fortunate turn of events can save us."

"If they are so sure, why do they not attack at once? Why is there any delay?"

"Because they have far-flung war-fronts, and it takes time to plan and execute a major attack on any one front..."

"Takes time, eh? I wonder," murmured Grayson.

But Sareen went on un-noticing with her explanation.

"...time to get the ships here, time to cover the distance. It has been estimated, that time. We know

pretty closely when they will attack, and we know what will happen. So far, we have but one defense, one weapon that they have not stolen, the Q-Order Menta-Barrier has not as yet been used by either of us."

"Just what is a Menta-Barrier, Sareen."

"It is a method of impressing a mental projection of a thought pattern upon one of these thought-crystals such as I carry at my belt. Inserted in an electric circuit, it can be used then to create a power screen around a ship, a force-wall of vibrations patterned in such a way that those frequencies they use for offense can not penetrate. The Q-Order Menta-Barrier is one that includes all the frequencies used previously and some new ones."

GRAYSON laughed. He wondered if his own world would seem so ridiculously, childish full of error and delusion as this one if he were an alien there? They thought that the Menta-Barrier they put into a crystal could be projected as a wall of force...and all the time they were creating the whole thing out of their own belief that it was true! The Karnians were accepting it because they pursued the same generally held errors, which errors became in truth the laws of this world because they all projected them into reality with all their minds—in this strange world where form and color and materiality all answered quite readily the vagaries of thought—because this world was truly and honestly not a world, but merely thought-bodies adrift in ether, creating about them by residual belief a world similar to the one they had been born upon—Lower Azura. So the old sayings that Hell and Heaven both reside within you was true! And these Azurans by

their acceptance of wholly imaginary limitations of their powers, were allowing the Karnians to defeat them—who also fought with the same limitations but had spies whose information made them BELIEVE they knew the answers to all the Azurans attacks and ruses—and hence because they *thought* they had the defense to every possible attack—they DID have it!

Grayson laughed out loud as he saw the ridiculous ease with which the tables could be turned upon the Karnians. He saw the hypnotist who had astounded him, long ago, on Earth—making a subject sit solidly down upon a chair that was not there, and remain suspended in the air—supported by nothing but *his own legs* and the conviction that he was upon a chair! He laughed again ... For this whole world was like that subject of the hypnotists—a mere generally-accepted conviction that things were as they were seen to be!

But he was neglecting Sareen, who certainly did not look to him like any "conviction" that she was not flesh and blood. She was real and vital and ravishing—

"Then one of the officers of the fleet is a traitor?" asked Grayson, glancing at Marduc in the distance.

"Of course, but which one?"

"I could guess," mused Grayson, directing their steps unconsciously in the dance toward Marduc.

"Just because you don't like Marduc, doesn't mean he is a traitor."

"I saw evil in him. What else would evil be doing among you of Azura?"

"You know our system of graduations. How could an evil man reach a position of power, as Marduc has, unless something were very wrong with our testing of such people?"

"Something *is* very wrong, dear Sareen. But I don't know whether it is safe to tell you or not. You might disappear!" Grayson smiled at her.

"Perhaps total reliance upon our unseen monitors is a mistake, you think?"

"A VERY large mistake. No one else can ever do your work for you in any world. You have to do these things your own selves. But that is not what I meant, though it is part of it."

"They have no real power among us, they are only eyes, and record keepers. How could an evil man reach power, though?"

"If he were an imposter, replacing a loyal man with a double. Or if your monitors were themselves plotting against you."

"Impossible. They are from the higher planes of life!"

"Such is but a belief, dear Sareen. What you believe is not always true. They might be merely aliens, from a different plane, possessing different abilities and natures—but your belief in their divinity would give them divine powers. Do you not know that?"

"I have suspicions, dear Paul."

"I think that this war of the Karnians has deeper significance than you think, Sareen. Some of these so-called monitors whom you know but cannot see—some of these regulators of your strange system of life, are traitors too! They want to rule in the place of Nardan, and are betraying him. Marduc could be the agent of such beings, planning through the other dimensions to wrest the material world of Azura from its rightful possessors and upon wrecked Azura build a new system to their own liking. Thus Marduc, an evil man, would rise to power. For their re-

wards he would sacrifice his chance of graduation into the other realms in the accepted way—would stake all on the chance the Karnians will win. It is not thought of by you as it should be. He is evil, he *is* your traitor, this Marduc!"

Thus absorbed in their low-spoken words to each other, Sareen and Grayson had glided along, and the last words had been said almost into the ear of Marduc, for they had danced almost into him where he stood beside the wide, gleaming floor of blue glass. Marduc had heard Grayson say .."evil..is your traitor, Marduc."

Knowing instantly that his life depended upon stopping any action this pair might take against him, Marduc, seeing in their surprised faces and expressions that they had not known he was beside them... Marduc seized the opportunity.

He grasped Grayson by the shoulder, shouting, "You name me traitor, you spy? I have taken all I can stomach from you."

Grayson stared into the dark eyes of Marduc's eyes, trying to rally from his surprise and the sudden weakness which he could not understand. Then he saw Marduc's companions, two who stood beside him, invisible to any but Grayson himself. They extended their rosy fluid bodies in a shield of impalpable opacity around the two men, and Grayson saw that not a single dancer saw anything unusual or turned their eyes toward them even though to Grayson, Marduc seemed making a Devil of a racket. The plot was getting clearer to Grayson. These invisibles were in truth a part of it, had gone over to the Karnians. There were others like Marduc. And Marduc had him at his mercy here, protected and aided by powers he could not understand, and none here able to witness what was going on for the shield of

opacity that shimmered about them, apparently unnoticeable to any other.

Sareen gave a scream and Grayson glanced her way to see hands lift her, begin to bear her away. Grayson wrenched powerfully with his hands, then threw his vision into the new range, and grasped with his inner strength at the core of the man. But his eyes were caught upon Marduc's black gaze as a moth upon a pin. Marduc held him there, throwing all his strength into a mental attack as cunning as it was unexpected. For he was strongly suggesting to Grayson that he was doomed, and from his eyes flowed with the fatal meaning an intent strong with the fire of hate, an intent to kill. Unable to extricate his will from the sudden meshing blackness spinning hypnotically upon him out of Marduc's eyes, Grayson could only throw his will into a stronger grasping after, an attempt to quench that inner flame of Marduc's evil being. Marduc staggered suddenly away from him, even as he himself staggered, felt the light go out about him, felt a black absorption strike his inner strength. The spinning black whorls that were Marduc's eyes suddenly became an abyss into which consciousness fell plummeting. Blackness, and a swelling and expansion and weakening of his strength—blackness engulfed him.

CHAPTER FOUR

"I am mass, alive with energy aware. Time and space are other things at which I peer. I press my life-energy-aware against space-time, it gives before me...."

GRAYSON awoke in a strange chamber. A stranger, not Sareen! Another woman, waiting there? He raised weakly on one elbow, said: "Sareen! Where is she?"

The woman gently pushed him back to the pillows, saying, "Sareen

will come back to you. I am taking her place. She is away."

"Marduc has stolen her. I know! You are lying to me. But you must not! Marduc is a spy, and is set upon having Sareen. You must not make any more mistakes about Marduc. Azura itself depends upon it. He has nearly succeeded in our defeat."

As Grayson fell again into unconsciousness, the stranger woman smiled sadly upon the poor alien, who had such very bad luck—his poor head quite addled by the strangeness of the new world of Azura. Sareen had not even been reported missing. She had sent word she was going to Amzor for a wedding trip. Which seemed very wise, for Azura was surely going to fall before the Karnians, she would go away herself if she had the means. This stranger was presumptuous to think that their own most paramount Sareen would be interested in one like him. The rich and powerful Lord Marduc; now, he was a catch for any woman. Why should he be a spy? Was he not already in possession of all that Azura could give him of pomp and circumstance?

Grayson's warning went unheeded, while Grayson lay, spiritually and physically shattered, weak as a kitten, his mind lost in mists of strange doubts of his own identity and whereabouts. While the water clock dripped the moments away, and the war-fleets of Karnia sped even to the very borders of the Azuran Empire—gathered there, unattacked, in ever greater strength.

But at last the weakness left his limbs, and as soon as Paul Grayson knew what had occurred and was able to move, he escaped his nurses vigilance, dressed himself unaided and made his way on stumbling feet out of the strange building and into the eerie silent streets of the city.

Grayson had learned much, both from his work with Sareen and from his own deductions, but the attack by Marduc had clinched his analysis of the nature of this world—a world of spirits who were convinced that they were material and so lived in an illusion of materiality that was little more than a generally accepted conventionality of thought.

These people were in truth only seeing mind pictures. They were not living a material life, but they did not know it, except vaguely, and in flashes of inner light. They did not have to walk across a room, if they but knew it, they could cross with the speed of thought. Grayson realized that the world of Azura was as it was only because of life which they brought with them from their previous, more physical life. Just why these people were ignorant of their true state Grayson could not fathom, but he knew it was true. And for him the veil of their reality was rent, he saw their limitations and knew them to be imaginary and self-imposed. For him, now, these limitations did not exist. If he could tear that veil from their eyes, they would be invincible to any onslaught the Karnians might launch. But could he do it?

He had learned from Marduc's attack. Some ancient wise man had left the details of such hypnosis behind him, and Marduc had learned it. You could conquer anyone if you could convince him hypnotically of his own destruction! Marduc had nearly convinced him. It had perhaps been his own almost-realized insight into the nature of this world that had saved him. He did not believe that anything could destroy him, and he had survived.

GRAYSON had practiced unobserved, upon his nurse, a simple

soul. He had noted she was affected by his attempts to use the same tactic of forceful mental flow carrying the same strong hypnotic suggestion that Marduc had used.

But he had not used it fully, only toyed with it weakly. Now, stumbling weakly along the streets toward the point he sensed was the palace of Nardan, he attempted to throw with his eyes a beam of force as Marduc had done when he had overcome him.

He dared not use one of the few Azurans about for a target, he did not know what might happen. He directed his energies toward a pillar that upheld the crystal dome over this part of the city streets, and was completely surprised to see it suddenly vaporize before the simple power of his alien eyes!

This proved to him that matter was *not* matter here, but a tenuous organization of some ethereal substance, controlled entirely by the mesh of the thought of the many—and it could be dissolved entirely by a forceful thought of its non-existence—its substance immediately rejoining the ethereal energies of the plane of this world.

He looked about him, noted he was unobserved. The great crystal dome bulged downward slightly where the pillar had supported the weight. The pillar itself was gone, all but a few ragged fragments jutting out of the clear transparent pavement. Silent, terrific moment of realization of utter power!

Grayson suspected that no Azuran could have done such a thing with a single unaided mind. Perhaps not at all, as it was most probable that the pillar had grown laboriously from the slow work of many hands, imagining themselves working with real matter, just as they had done in their earlier existence.

Grayson threw his will into an attempt to reassemble its structure from out of the tenuous energies of the Azuran atmosphere—or ether—he wondered what it really was. At first slowly, then rapidly, the pillar grew from a slender reed into its original appearance! The energy of this world answered and obeyed his thought—or he had fooled himself into believing the pillar was still there.

Whichever was true, Grayson knew did not matter, the essential thing was that the generally held concept was the ruling one, but that it could be overthrown by superior force of thought strongly focused. He sensed that in a way, both his views of the phenomena of this world's immateriality were correct, and neither of them wholly correct. But he had learned.

Grayson knew that his ascent from a world vastly different from the Azurans "lower Azura" gave him powers that no Azuran would ever understand fully.

Half exhausted from the strenuous mental effort, weak and giddy still from the effects of the blow Marduc had struck at him, Grayson staggered into the great throne room of the Lord Nardan, Ruler of All Azura, to find there another such conference as he had first witnessed.

ABOUT the throne were a dozen fleet officers, and among them the tall, grey-haired Istar. He could hear his mental flows, with the rush and flux of far voyages, the strident memory of pulsing energy vortices driving Azuran ships at full torsion, echoing through the mariners speech, the thought flavor so different from any but a space-man's of long experience. He was saying:

"Lord Nardan, beloved Ruler, there can be no victory with the Karnians

in possession of the Q-Order Menta-Barrier. I have asked for the spy to be found, the leaks to be stopped. It has not been done. Now our last defense has been stolen. Today when we opened the vaults to remove the Q-Order formulas and reset the key-crystals of our projectors in the city and in the fleet we found the whole file stolen. It is doubtful if we have left enough data to reconstruct the formulas for our own use. We have not kept them from the Karnians, and we are lost before the battle begins."

The great figure of Nardan rose from the throne, towering a foot higher in stature than any other there. He paced across the dais, his hands clenched into fists, beating his great white fists against his temples.

"Must we flee, then? Is it not even left us to die like men? What do you council now, the battle already lost?"

Grayson, staggering forward, threw his own thought-flows toward the Ruler.

"Marduc is one of your spies! Some of your so-noble and sacred immortal monitors, whom you seem to think so above you that they could have no interest in betraying you—are also Karnian agents, I saw them aiding Marduc. It may be that he has still the Q-Order formulas, since I do not believe the monitors could conceal an opaque object of that type on their persons. Search Marduc's chambers, his person, perhaps he not yet had a chance to get them into Karnian hands."

The officers, grouped about the foot of the great throne, spun about as one man, to see the pale-faced, stumbling figure of Grayson staggering toward them, one hand pointing at Marduc, who was slipping aside behind the other figures as if to avoid that pointing finger.

For a long minute not a thought

disturbed the ominous atmosphere of the throne room. Then the Ruler asked, his thought weary and unbelieving, "Why do you name Marduc, stranger? On what do you base such a serious charge?"

"Where is Sareen? She can tell you what this Marduc has done!" Grayson looked about wildly, his mind not functioning, weakness clouding his sight.

The Ruler singled out Marduc with his great weary eyes asking a mute question. Marduc, sure that he could handle this alien, who must be near dead if Marduc knew anything of his own destructive powers, stepped forward to the first step of the dais, and in turn his finger singled out Grayson as he said:

"What he says is the result of madness and jealousy, Lord Nardan. When Sareen chose me instead of him as her future mate, his weak alien nature succumbed to the loss, he suffered a mental breakdown. Sareen and I put him in the Mentalo-juve Medical Home, and I sent Sareen to my estates upon Kadon until this affair with Karnia has blown over. Then we plan to be married."

"Sareen, a member of my staff, deserting me in my greatest need? I do not understand, it is not her nature to flee from danger. Are you sure you have not exceeded discretion. You did not abduct Sareen?"

GRAYSON, seeing the man's plan clearly now, summoned a strength from his last reserves, and almost staggered the tall figure of the Ruler with the fierceness of his thought-flow.

"The man is a liar and a traitor," Grayson cried, "He has abducted the innocent Sareen, who despises him. He struck me with the aid of two of the monitors, whom you trust so much. He has a peculiar mental pow-

er he never learned among Azurans, with which he struck me. And do you know why? Because he overheard Sareen and I discussing the fact that everything pointed to Marduc as the spy, and that we should delay no longer in calling the facts to your attention. That is why I have been sick, and why Sareen no longer serves Azura, which she loves far more than Marduc, I assure you."

Marduc, to stop the flow of Grayson's all too-revealing words, struck at him suddenly with the black force of his eyes. But there were no rosy invisibles at his side to weaken and hold Grayson's mind from retaliation. Grayson was ready, and parried the flow with a return thrust of the golden energy he had discovered in himself earlier. Marduc staggered aside, and Grayson was forced to stop his attack to keep from destroying those figures between him and his enemy.

Marduc, shielding himself with the bodies of those about the throne, turned to Lord Nardan, shouting:

"This alien is your spy who was sent to get the Q-Order formulas. Do not listen to his counter-accusations. You all know me too well to listen to such charges!"

The Ruler, bending his eyes in sharp regard upon Marduc, saw the fear and the weakness in him, and smelled very plainly that all was not as it should be. Marduc was too vehement, too afraid, too utterly wrong in appearance and bearing. Besides, they had lost such things long before Grayson came among them.

But Grayson did not wait. His new senses told him what to do as if he had done the same thing a thousand times before. With every atom of his will he directed Marduc to become visible instead of opaque to the eyes in the throne room, even as Grayson saw the evil soul of him. With his

new learned power he stripped off the cloak of accepted solidity of Marduc's figure, and a shimmering greyness was seen where Marduc had stood, a greyness rent here and there, so that the fiery core showed through.

As the Azuran illusion of solidity fell away from about the force vortices that were his true body, their minds saw quite clearly the repellant core of him writhing and twisting to hide itself from their eyes behind the hard drawn curtains of grey neutral mist-force. Every man in the room drew away from the pillar of infectious evil that the noble-seeming figure of Marduc had suddenly become.

"See for yourselves, warriors of Azura, the inner secrets of your comrade in arms! He is a traitor by nature and a traitor in fact!"

"Strange power," murmured Nardan, striding down the steps to stand by Grayson's side and see more closely just how the deed of stripping off the visible solidity and revealing the underlying forces was done. He looked into Grayson's eyes, and put his hand up to his own head, drawing back. He stood in deep thought, then repeated:

"Strange powers you demonstrate, Paul Grayson, alien to our Azuran life. How do we know, since you have such powers, what other secrets you may not have kept from us? How do we know that Marduc, heretofore our trusted friend and warrior, is not painted by your powerful alien will in these evil colors that you show us for the first time? I do not understand..." The big ruler stood in deep thought, as if remembering something long ago learned, and since forgotten.

"But I seem to remember a time when I too had such powers. Too long have I relied upon the invisible others to do my own work. This re-

liance upon the unseen can betray a man, or a nation."

Istar, his eyes flashing between the eerie sight of the transparent body of Marduc and the glowing alien eyes of Grayson sending out such power as no man of Azura possessed, to cause the miracle of Marduc's revealment, suddenly sent out his own thought to Grayson.

"Friend, I think it is clear you have solved one of our worst dilemmas. I see well now, much that was hidden to me before you came among us. I do not understand this, but I see it now. Relax! Conserve your mental energies, we will have a vast need of them before many hours are sped, the Karnians are almost upon us."

CHAPTER FIVE

*"O God of men, why hold concealed Your light?
When shall Your sun erase this blot of night?
Can You not spare us but one flash, one beam?
Must we believe that You are in our plight?"*

Hafiz

GRAYSON stood beside Istar upon the great bridge of the flagship in which he had been interviewed before, upon his first arrival among the Azurans. For an hour they had sped outward from Azura, and in that time Grayson had been earnestly explaining to Istar his discoveries of the immaterial nature of their world, and illusory thought-mold which their minds held around the possibilities of their life like a strait-jacket. He was half-convinced, but could not conceive how to put Grayson's theory to work in the coming battle.

About them was arranged the speeding fleet of Azura, mighty in appearance, but Grayson had seen the strength of the Karnians before, and knew that it would be much aug-

mented this time by new forces brought from other parts of space. The officers of the fleet were gloomy and despondent, the Q-Order formulas had not been found in Marduc's quarters, though they had found evidences of his plan to flee the city before the fleet took off for battle, and other incriminating evidence which clinched the case against him. But they all felt they were speeding toward certain extinction. Grayson was in a fever of deep mental effort, trying to get it through their heads that their limitations were self imposed, that they could of their massed will construct such weapons as would wipe out the Karnians if only they could understand their hidden strength.

Finally Istar turned to Grayson. He said:

"Stranger, you have proved a friend, and I think you may be right in your discovery of our nature. But we cannot throw off the mental habits of a lifetime in one short hour of time! There is no hope of victory for us unless you yourself with your alien powers of mind discover it for us. Perhaps if one of our officers explained our weapons and our secrets to you, worked with you, you might deduce or discover further uses for your new powers, some way to use your mind augmented by our mechanisms, immaterial as they seem to you—they yet have power. For you know they are not really immaterial, they are just to your thinking less solid and of different substances than your own world matter. Now go, and make the effort, I must concentrate upon maneuvers."

Grayson went down into the lower aisles and chambers of the ship, escorted by an officer strange to him, who had been ordered to explain and to help Grayson in anyway he could. He felt very discouraged, for he

could not conceive how even his newfound secret of their substance could be used as a weapon in the coming struggle. He was weary, he felt already defeated, and he could do nothing without Sareen beside him.

But as the officer, a young appearing man named Satpor, explained the workings of the menta-ray cannon, Grayson saw an opportunity.

"The pattern of the ray is impressed upon the crystal, which retains such mental projection implicitly. Then the crystal is inserted here into the breech of the gun, the menta-ray energies pour through it, and are concentrated by the windings of the magnetic bore of the gun into a beam. The wide end of the cannon barrel contains an adjustable focusing device, which widens or narrows the beam, bringing it to a sharp, hard focus at any distance desired."

As Satpor talked, he took the cannon apart before Grayson's eyes, showing him part by part. As he began to replace the parts, Grayson picked up the menta-crystal, the key and heart of the device, and examined it. Throwing his vision into the strange range of penetrative perception, he looked into the crystal, and saw there the pulsing, seemingly alive force-pattern, a glowing, reddish assembly of little force-vortices. Reaching toward it with his mental powers, he made an effort to rearrange the little vortices, feeling with his sensitivities for a pattern of destruction, and sending into the crystal his own intent to destroy the Karnian fleet by convincing them of their own immateriality. This was his theory, and this crystal and projector might do the job he had before thought of doing only with his limited personal power.

But there was no target on which to try his newly designed beam.

EVEN AS they stood there examining the open breech of the rather simple ray-cannon mechanism, a cry rang from the ships communicator system, a thought-flow from Istar—

"The enemy is sighted! Battle stations, Formation P; Take evasive action until further orders!"

Satpor gave a curse. "Already we must flee, before we have even fired a shot! It is shameful that we should have been betrayed. But what chance have we got?"

Over the ray-cannon was a great view-port, which was in truth a screen which magnified the light that struck it from the distance. It was a kind of telescope, and it was synchronized to sight the cannon, with cross-hairs across the pearly crystal lens, wide as a port-hole.

The crew, who had sprang to put the cannon in readiness, were stopped by Grayson's upheld hand.

"Get me the enemy fleet in this sight-device," ordered Grayson, and Satpor nodded to the men to obey. One of them turned the controls beneath the disk of crystal, and upon it came into view a line of dots, dim and wavering in the distance. But swiftly they grew larger and more solid upon the view-port. They were approaching at top speed.

"If we're going to take evasive action, we'd better start taking it," murmured Satpor, as if to himself. But Grayson had inserted the menta-crystal in the breech, and was swinging the gun into position. The cross-hairs centered on the distant enemy, and Grayson cried—"Fire" because he did not know how the thing was done. Satpor pressed a lever, even as the great ship began to swing about on a new course. Out from the barrel an amazing beam, purple and sparkling with golden whorls, and in an instant the beam cut off, was to be seen only as a lance of force, speeding toward

the distant fleet. The ship had been swinging, the beam fanned out as it fled, so that it became a wide fan of force taking in the whole center of the distant fleet, obscuring the enemy as it spread wider.

"If that had been a Q-Order beam," murmured Satpor, "instead of the old pattern for which they have the barrier formula, it would have done some damage."

Grayson watched intently, hoping that his change in the pattern of the menta-crystal might have resulted in something for which the enemy was not prepared.

Suddenly from the communicators roared the voice of Istar—"Who fired that beam without orders? Report at once to the bridge!"

Satpor smiled at Grayson, who had jumped at the sudden vehemence and volume of the order. "Looks like we've exceeded our discretion..."

In silence the two men made their way back to the bridge where Istar bent over an array of great view crystals, watching both his own array of ships and the enemies' approach. He turned on Grayson fiercely.

"What the Karnian idiots are up to I don't know, but what the name of Baal did you throw at them, you... you phenomena!" Istar grinned.

Grayson bent over the score of great view crystals with Istar. The enemy fleet was now engaged in a weird maneuver, each ship describing a sharp circle and starting off at a tangent to the circle on a new course. But in the center of the line were three large, lazily coiling puffs of dust, that Grayson knew with elation must be Karnian ships that had exploded when struck by his beam.

Satpor looked at the three puffs of doom with ill-disguised wonder. Then he eyed Grayson curiously, a little awed. Then he turned to Istar.

"Commander, if you will give me this man, I will punish him by making him do the same to each of our guns aboard ship. He had that crystal in his hands, looked at it, put it back and ordered us to fire. You swung the ship—and the beam struck three instead of one—and all of them, at that distance—are destroyed. It is impossible, they are not in effective range!"

"What did you do, Wizard?" bel-lowed Istar, staggering Grayson with the force of his thought.

"I merely rearranged the pattern I saw in the crystal," weakly answered Grayson. "Just experimenting, as you told me to do."

"YOU'VE DONE enough. We've got them, if you can do the same to each of our weapons. They can't figure *that* out, it isn't on paper. You know, you wonderful fool, that we can't even *see* into those crystals, and that they have to be charged with those patterns by a series of impregnations with powerful beams from thought-augmentors, in our laboratories on Azura. The men who do that work are trained from childhood in the art, and yet you do it with a flick of an eyelash. unaided by mechanical means. You are impossible! We're running away, do you hear? You get busy, Satpor, and as soon as he finishes with our guns, you will board the next ship."

As they started to leave the room, Istar gave a cry.

"Come back here! I'm not letting Grayson out of my sight. I've had enough treachery for one war, Satpor. I don't trust even you. You bring the crystals, and I'll have another return them. And I'll detail a dozen men to guard you while you do the job."

The sweat sprang suddenly out upon Satpor's forehead as Istar gave these orders. Grayson wondered at his sudden show of strain. Was the man a

spy, or only hated to be suspected of the shame of treason?

As he left, Grayson murmured—"He didn't like your suspicion, Great Istar."

"I noticed that, too. Is it any wonder I'm suspicious?"

"What became of the rosy-figured monitors I have seen about? Some of them are traitors, too, and I fear them more than any of your native Azurans, Istar."

"They're a part of our religion, Grayson. We hardly believe in them, never seeing them, you know. But since you see them, they must be there! It is strange to hear you accuse them of being enemies."

"I noticed none of them about the ship, today."

"Probably thought we would be destroyed, didn't want any. To me they are a figment of legend, not to be taken seriously."

"I would revise that estimate of their importance, Istar. They can yet be the means of our defeat. They are strong, and they have powers from another sphere of life. They know what I know, that your Azura itself is a kind of illusion, due to mass-mind fixations, and not to any law of nature."

Istar stared at him. "Could you best them, Grayson?"

"How would I know that, Istar? I have never tried!"

"If what you say of them is true, you may get the chance."

As they talked, the great ship had put on speed, and the dots on the view-crystals began to recede, themselves now on a course diverging from their own. Both fleets were swiftly drawing apart. Istar said:

"We've got them puzzled. We've shown them a weapon they can't match, and yet we are in flight, not in pursuit, and they can't figure it out. They will come about and trail

us, after a time, but they'll keep their distance, at least till they analyze the beam pattern you flung at them."

"You mean they can ascertain the nature of the beam I constructed in the menta-crystal?"

"There is a device on every ship which catches such beam pictures, and gives the analyst a clue to the nature of the beam. That is how defense force-screens are built when you do not have spies, such as Karnia has used against us."

"Then I cannot use the same thought-pattern to change the key-crystals of the cannon!"

"Why, no! Do you know only one?"

"It is not that, I have had no opportunity to test such work. I can change the pattern, but how do I know it will work?"

"We'll test each crystal on a small target, don't worry about that. We cast an object out of the port, and train the beam upon it. You get to work, Satpor has returned, with his guard of honor, and loaded down, all of them, with our armament." Istar grinned a mocking grin at Satpor, as if he knew something that Satpor would wish he did not know.

"THIS MUST delight you, this work, Satpor," murmured Istar for his ear alone.

"It does, Commander, can you not see my delight?"

"I can see it, but it looks a little gloomy to me. Suppose you consider yourself under arrest and go and take a nice rest in the brig until this brawl is over. I am not sure about you. You are a very poor actor, Satpor!"

"Commander Istar! You know, yet you sent me on this errand. Why?"

"To have you watched, and to make sure. Do you think I am friendless, that there is no one I can trust?"

Even as Satpor stepped back, to

leave on his dismal self-arrest errand, one of his accompanying guards stepped forward, saluted, said— "He stopped at his cabin and examined each of these crystals that we bear. I watched through the door-transom. He did something to each one. They may be dangerous to work with now. I would suggest jettisoning the lot, and getting this ally of ours other and new crystals from the stores."

"Very good work, Lieutenant Paronu. I am taking no chances with Crayson's mind. Get other crystals, we will use these as targets, to test Grayson's new force patterns upon."

It was an endless job; at the end of hour's of work Grayson had but a small pile of a few hundred crystals ready for use. As he finished one, it was taken to a cannon, inserted, and from a port one of the menta-crystals was thrown out into space. The gunner centered the target, pressed the trigger, and if the crystal destroyed the target, it was sent on to the gun it was intended for. But it took too long, and the Karnian fleet, which had come about and was following their course, began to close in. Their greater speed was evident in this drawn out pursuit.

Istar, his eyes worried, watched the enemy fleet get nearer, begin to fire upon them, though the range was still too great.

"Paronu," he bellowed, his thought-flow powerful as a storm—"take a scout ship, and get one of these crystals to each of our fleet. There is no time for more, we're in for it. They are too fast for us."

Grayson sank exhausted to the deck, his mind whirling with weakness from the effort. "Nor any Grayson for more, either, Istar," he murmured, and passed out.

deep sense of loss and pain. For an instant he felt sure that some peril threatened her, or that she was dead, for him to feel as he did. But he shook off the feeling and arose from the couch where someone had placed him, and made his way unaided back to the bridge. It was significant of his recognition that the guards at the doorway did not challenge him, but only entered ahead of him, and announced him, as though he were royalty or a privileged character of some special kind.

Grayson stood beside Istar, where he was bent in intense concentration over the score of view-crystals, occasionally bellowing an order into the Azuran equivalent of a microphone in his hand. It was crystal the size of an orange, with tiny golden wires attached. Grayson recognized it as similar to the device which Sareen had worn at her waist when he first met her, and it gave him a twinge.

On the view planes of the crystals aligned across the bridge like a shelf of great glistening plates set close together, Grayson saw a composite picture of space in all directions. Scattered through that space were hundreds of great space warships, dodging and turning in intricate maneuvers, firing rapidly and constantly. It was plain that Azura was fighting a running battle, and not doing too badly. Grayson saw that the Azuran ships were handicapped in not having the volume of fire that their enemies were blasting at them, their only slightly less speed did not seem to be counting heavily against them. They could not escape, they were giving good account of themselves, and were fighting a very clever battle, leading one after another of the pursuing ships into a waiting battery's guns. Grayson saw that their own ship was at some distance from the main engagement, while Istar was

GRAYSON awoke from a dream of searching for his Sareen with a

directing the maneuvers. His great thought-voice was cold, hard, infinitely determined, and strong with something that was not hope, but the will to make every pulse of Azuran energy count.

He shot a quick glance at Grayson, then turned to an officer, saying—"Take over for a moment!"

Then he turned to Grayson, showing his broad ruddy face into his as if about to strike him a blow with his fist.

"Now that you're back on your feet, get busy and make us some more weapons! Keep at it till you drop, or we're lost. We're ranging them with your rays, but even so, they are too many for us, and their fire power is so much greater I've got to have more guns. Try something different, that doesn't exhaust you so much. Try to do the job without knocking yourself out, Grayson. The life of Azura itself depends on you!"

With one big hand he shoved him back out the door, and Grayson staggered twenty feet with the force of the shove. Where had he gotten the idea he was built more strongly than these Azurans?

Within minutes he was standing before the waiting stack of crystals, of graduated sizes, with Lieutenant Paronu waiting to take the product of his ingenuity away to the waiting cannon. Paronu bent over him, his eyes on fire with the desperate battle strain he had been under while Grayson lay unconscious.

Paul Grayson picked up the biggest of the crystals stacked there like vast jewels shimmering and alive with the forces prisoned inside them. He felt weak and unable to concentrate, but pulled himself together, sent his other-world vision into the interior of the great jewel, watched the spinning little vortices of prisoned energy, tried to manipulate them

without putting out a great outlay of effort. One by one he pinned them, held them, thinking desperately how he might best put his intent to work within this pattern of destruction in such a way that...

HE REMEMBERED his effort that had destroyed the pillar in the city street in Azura, and that he had been sure then that this world was but an illusion in the minds of tenuous force creatures—once products of a life in a material world like his own, who had brought their ideas of nature into this tenuous ethereal world. That to dissipate this illusion all that was necessary was a thought, energized with a little traveling beam of his own life-energy, which told the strangely retentive units of this ethereal "matter" that they were not obliged any longer to adhere to each other. That each unit of that matter, each atom or molecule or whatever the proper word might be—had in it the same faculty of retention that these crystals had in them, of retaining thought impressions and using them as a pattern of organization. That it was that fact, that they were very life-like in their response to the thought of living creatures, that made Azura the world of luxurious illusion that it was. Illusion was here more than illusion, it was the law of nature that upheld the world, just as the laws of gravity and of molecular adhesion upheld his own world.

So thinking, and so analyzing his situation, it occurred to Grayson that in order to destroy the Karnian fleet, they had only to be mentally convinced that it *WAS* destroyed, and it would immediately disappear and leave them struggling as mere vague force-bodies in a kind of vacuum, even as he himself had been struggling and lost in a non-supporting

medium upon his arrival in this plane of life!

How to convince a horde of creatures whose thought he did not really comprehend himself that their ships had been destroyed? It seemed to Grayson that this could only be done by putting in front of them a picture of something that they had never seen or heard of before, of vast destructive power that they would believe was material destruction, was truly and completely real! If they believed it, it would BE real in fact in this plane!

They had never heard of an atom bomb, or of his own discovery of what he called cosmic power. Both were vastly destructive, and with this crystal he could cause this thought pattern, alien to their thought, to be sent to them. It was worth a try!

Intently he bent over the great crystal, impressing upon it his mental picturization of the explosion of an atom bomb of vast size, such an explosion as would fill space for a thousand miles about them with lethal radiations, with a blast of force which could not leave any material thing in any state but atomic division—the ultimate dust of disintegration!

Feverishly he struggled with the tiny moving picture of the vitals of force itself within the crystal, until to his eyes the picture was identical to that picture he had witnessed when he had been an official observer of the atomic bomb experiments at Bikini. With trembling hands he put the big crystal in the hands of the officer waiting. Paronu took it, wondering at Grayson's intent expression, for it seemed as if he handed him something that might explode in his hands.

"First take me to Commander Istar again. I must explain the use of this new weapon, or it will destroy Azu-

rans too."

Paronu complied, carrying the crystal with a worried air, for he had caught Grayson's expression of extreme peril as he gave it him.

ISTAR was shaking a great fist at a wedge of Karnian ships which were boring into his center, splitting the Azuran formation into two parts. Even Grayson could see that the maneuver was one, if successful, would prove the first step in their complete disorganization. As Istar directed one half his strength to make a full circle and join the fleet at the other end, thus shifting his center to what was now the right end, Grayson put his hand on his shoulder.

"I have the thing will give you victory, Commander," Grayson shouted orally at the Azuran, forgetting his whereabouts, and the sound of his words echoed in the big bridge chamber strangely as gunshots in church. Istar spun about, eyeing Grayson with ill-disguised anger.

Grayson pointed to the big shimmering jewel, lit from within with the flickering fires of its atomic illusion—or was it illusion?

"Any of our forces to whom this thing is not explained will die when this is fired. Let me have your communicator, just for six breaths!"

Paul took the wired little crystal from Istar's hand, directed his thought into its center.

"Men of Azura, this is Grayson who has given you the effective crystals you now use in your cannon. I have prepared now a new and dangerous ray, it will destroy the whole of the enemy fleet. But it will not harm any Azuran ship unless you fail to understand. When this ray is fired, every man must close his eyes. If any man of our forces opens his eyes when this shot is fired, it will not only blind him, it will conduct the

energies of this ray into his own ship and kill his comrades. Do you comprehend?"

One by one the remaining ships of the Azurans sent their assurance of understanding. Grayson then relinquished the communicator to the commander.

"I will tell you when we are ready to fire, Commander Istar. Then you must order every member of your fleet to close his eyes, else will they be blinded and their ship destroyed. Curiosity will be their death!"

"Understood, get to it! We are almost defeated. Hurry, or it will be too late!"

Grayson shot one look at the view-planes of the great glowing board of crystals, saw the maneuver of the wedge had pierced the center, the left wing of Azura had peeled off and was swinging in a wide circle to rejoin the fleet at the other end of the line of battle. But down upon that circling array of ships was diving from above a vast black cloud of Karnian destroyers, rays blazing, screens up, looking like great black bubbles of doom, bubbles that emitted constant streams of fiery death. Their superior speed was going to cut off the circling ships from the main body of the fleet. It was the completed maneuver, and the Karnian attack was very evidently going to succeed. Within short minutes the Azuran fleet would be in hopeless position for defense or attack.

Grayson turned, sprang out the door, raced along the outside companion way to the nearest gun turret. Pulling open the round door, he pushed Paronu ahead of him into the turret, shoved aside the gunner, began dismantling the breech mechanism where the great crystal lay in its bed between the energizing poles that terminated the great cables that led in twisted strength into the

breech.

THE GUNNER, falling against the wall, gave vent to an exclamation of anger, was about to strike Grayson with a wrench he seized from a wall rack, but Paronu stopped him with a word. Grayson got the crystal into place, slammed shut the breech, screwed down the bolts.

"Tell Istar we are ready to fire!" cried Grayson orally again, and his words made the turret shake with their strange other-world echoings. The gunners held their hands to their heads in pain, glaring at this interloper, half inclined to mutiny. Paronu seized the round little communicator from the wall bracket, shouted into it:

"Commander Istar, give the order for blindness, we are ready to fire the dangerous beam!"

For an instant there was only silence, Grayson could see in his thought the big commander doubting his own wisdom in allowing such departures from normal procedure in battle.

Then the big speaker crystal in the wall began to vibrate with utter deafening waves of thought energy, and the voice of the commander bellowed; "Men of Azura, to save your own sight and your own lives, close your eyes against the blast to come!"

In an instant Grayson's hand was on the firing lever, and as he heard Istar say in a lower voice—

"All remaining ships have reported obedience to the order, stranger! Fire away!"

Paul Grayson, stranger in the ethereal world of Azura, spun the wheel of the gun pointing mechanism, until the cross hairs of the crystal over the gun centered upon the largest number of Karnian ships—those great black bubbles that were ships surrounded by opaque force

screens, now almost upon the fleeing segment of the Azuran line—and passed the firing lever full down.

Even he closed his eyes for an instant, but as there was no vast burst of expected sound, he blinked his eyes at the view crystal, and the flaring light there struck him senseless to the metal of the deck. Whether it was metal or ethereal illusion, the deck and his head made contact with a bump that knocked the wits from his head and left only a vast pain, and Grayson knew even in that world of pain and blindness his own carelessness had cost him—that *something* had happened when he energized that crystal of retentive immaterial "matter". Something that might have wiped out the Azuran fleet as well as the enemy.

Shaking his head, Grayson staggered erect, trying to see, but his eyes only gave him a vision of tall forms of vibrant force-vortices, rosy and blue and gold, about him.

A voice strange to him murmured close beside him—"You would do well to obey your own orders, Paul Grayson."

Grayson recognized the rosy shape beside him as one of the monitors he had thought neutral or enemy or both.

"Who are you?" queried Paul.

"A friend who shielded you just now from your own eyes' inexperience. I broke the conductive beam of your eyes in time to save you. Had it not been for Sareen and your love for her, I would have let you pass on to the next world of Etherea. There you would have been even less at home than here, I assure you!"

"Thanks, friend. Did my "atomic bomb" illusion work."

"Here in this plane, your atomic bomb was quite as effective as it is on your own world, even more so I would say."

FOR AN INSTANT the rosy pale fingers of force touched his eyes, passed over his head and limbs, and Paul Grayson came back to the world of vision and matter that he had decided was but an illusion to the Azurans.

The gun turret was wrecked. The bodies of the lieutenant and the gunners lay about, and Grayson bent for an instant to note whether they were dead or only shocked into unconsciousness. But he could not tell, they breathed or did not breathe, in his own shaky condition he could not say.

He turned to the sighting view-crystal over the barrel of the ray-cannon, and spun the focusing dials to get a wide-focus view of the whole field of the space battle.

Grayson gave a great cry of doubt, of relief, of unbelief, then a shout of laughter. He had been right! This immaterial "material" of this world would answer a thought command, this world of ships and flesh and matter and machines was in truth an illusion that could be shattered by a picture of an atomic bomb if the picture were accepted by those who saw it as a true one! Grayson could not accept the rosy monitor's view of what had happened, or that the being had saved his life by cutting off his sight. He had seen, he had not believed, and the monitor was one of those who Grayson suspected of working for Karnia, who had been about to stop Grayson's work, and had been too late, was covering his failure with the intent to confuse Grayson analysis of what he had done. He whirled, throwing his sight into the penetrative vision range he had learned, in order to analyze the force-body of the rosy alien "monitor", but he was nowhere to be seen, nor were his companions, who had seemed to be standing about him when Grayson had been blinded by

the blast.

To Grayson this proved that they feared him, knew that the ruse would but hold him off for a short time. For it was in his mind that these "monitors" must be next on Azura's list of enemies—if what he suspected were true. But why had they not destroyed him, it had seemed an opportune time?

Not pausing to seek them more, he turned back to the view-crystal, turning the sighting device across the whole field of battle. Floating everywhere about the area were the bodies of the Karnians, unharmed for the most part, their arms and legs thrashing about in complete lack of wounds or hurt of any kind. Yet of Karnian material ships and weapons, there was not a sign in the skies. His blast had been curiously selective, destroying the "matter" of the Karnians, leaving the "matter" of the Azuran fleet intact because they had not seen and been convinced of their own destruction. Speeding here and there were the scout ships and tenders of the fleet of Azura, stopping to pick up the Karnian survivors. Grayson fell to the deck in uncontrollable hysteria, and laughing at the sight, expected but yet—impossible to his eyes! So much so that to his strained mind it was inexpressibly funny. The thought voice of Istar bellowing from the communicator brought him out of the laughing fit.

"Grayson, you utter idiot, what in rosy-fingered Damnation have you done to the poor Karnians? They are floating all over the place, and half of them think they are angels of light—they are trying to fly!"

Grayson staggered to the speaking crystal, shouted: "Pick them up before they figure it out or they can still make trouble. I told you this world of yours was an illusion and I just proved it! I didn't put anything

in that crystal but a suggestion of intense and blinding light..."

GRAYSON could hear the big commander cursing to himself, then heard him laughing again at some angle of the sight of the Karnians floating in space denuded of ships and weapons.

Grayson left the turret, and leaned weakly against the wall of the companionway. He could see the bodies of the men in the turret begin to stir, and he made his way toward the bridge with a sigh of utter relief.

The communicators along the way kept up a steady succession of commands as Istar directed the work of capture, then:

"Paul Grayson, get up here! If you don't show up I'm going to tell the fleet what you did for them—and that you think their ships are illusions!"

Paul stepped to a wall bracket where a speaking crystal hung, and centered his effort in it.

"If you tell the whole fleet what I told you, Istar, and if they understand you—you won't have a fleet! It will dissolve around you! Just ignore the whole thing till we are alone. Then I'll explain. Your world depends on a general concept, it is held together only by the tenuous threads of your people's thought. Any "truth" or "falsehood" of that kind can dispell the whole illusion of materiality...even though it is not strictly illusion. You keep your secret, Istar!"

"Agreed, you blasted magician! But get up here and explain me out of this, I don't know what to tell them!"

"Explain it any way you want, I'm busy!" Grayson laughed...understanding his dilemma. Then, stronger in his limbs and now clear in the mind, he made his way to the lower

side of the big ship, where the little scout flyers were kept, the life boats and general purpose tenders of the big craft. Selecting the largest of these still in their cradles, Grayson opened the round port, got in, sent the little ship out into that space that had once seemed so strange to him. Now—it was the path to Sareen, and he was delaying no longer. Spreading the charts on his lap, he picked out the little red dot that marked Kadon, a far-circling satellite of Azura. Setting the simple directional control, he relaxed, and in an instant a body lay slumped in the seat—tenantless.

On Kadon, a grey and violet force-shape hovered over a girl's figure in a garden. Slowly, gently, Paul Grayson settled to the transparent earth beside Sareen.

She sat looking disconsolately at the grass, upon a wide carved bench of ebony. At each end of the bench

leaned two stalwart guards in the gold and scarlet colors of Marduc, whose estate this garden centered.

Grayson, invisible in his "real" body, put out his grey fingers, touched Sareen's hand gently. For an instant she shrank from the touch, looking around wildly. Then she relaxed, as his quiet thought flowed to meet her seeking—and in a swift full instant of communion and understanding, her body slumped, empty and tenantless—between the frightened, wondering guards.

High, higher—two radiant beings winged on a nuptial flight, their arms enlacing the loved, "immaterial" bodies of the other.

* * *

"Just what is illusion, anyway?" murmured the grey-and-violet to the gold-and-blue-and-rose figure.

"Everything that is not love, my dearest mate," answered the wisdom of the other.

ELECTRIC MUSCLES



By CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT



IT IS HARD indeed for science fiction to keep up with fact, these days. This magazine has always prided itself on keeping well ahead of scientific advances with shrewd extrapolations of its own. Again we are forced to pat ourselves on the back. In the last few months we have been seriously concerned with the wonderful developments taking place in cybernetics, that science of control and communication the machine and the animal.

It has been pointed out that man is gradually reaching the point in his study of automatic machines, where he can construct devices which will help the physically disabled. Machines for reading aloud from ordinary type in books and magazines, hearing aids, artificial limbs electrically controlled, and a host of other half-human machines have been in the process of generation. But the scientists haven't stopped here.

Our sister magazine, RADIO NEWS, has, in a recent issue, discussed some astounding inventions having to do with persons who are paraplegics, that is, paralyzed from the waist down. This injury is due to severing of the spinal cord, thus

preventing nerve messages from reaching the muscles of the lower body and the legs. But on a number of individuals, a unique experiment has been performed.

Into certain muscles of the legs, wires have been planted, most often next to the skin, and by means of a small switch and battery, the injured man can give his muscles a suitable electrical impulse corresponding to a muscular kick. This causes the leg muscles to contact and bend the leg, as much as an impulse from the brain would do!

Can you imagine the consequences of such a thing if it is ever perfected? The very thought is staggering. It is gradually coming to the point where the human and the machine may be tied together in such a fashion that the machine can take over disabilities and failed-functions of the human body. This bodes well for any of the injured.

Naturally it must not be construed that it is now possible to make a half-man, half-robot. That is a long way off, but a great deal of hope is extended to individuals, who, hitherto have had no hope whatsoever. Never say die when it comes to applying science.

Mr. JONES' ETERNAL CAMERA

By Berkeley Livingston



The little man was sewing dresses on . . . photographs!

Rusty Carver had a complaint about the tenant in the next room. It seemed he was constantly operating a sewing machine. He was sewing tiny dresses on photographs!

“JOE,” ‘Rusty’ Carver began, his voice no higher than a muted shout, “I ain’t never squawked before, have I—?”

Moe Casey, the proprietor of ‘Moe’s Mansion’, the Ritz of skid row, lifted leaden lids and regarded the man on the other side of the desk with introspective glance. It was quite impossible to tell what Moe was thinking at any time, he had that kind of immobile face. Yet there were some, who, knowing the man through long years of association, were able to penetrate the fog of his silence. Rusty Carver was one of these.

“Nope!” Moe said succinctly.

“So okay! So I never squawked. Comes the first time, but. An’ this is it. Fifteen years I been in this joint. Fifteen years but never do I hear the racket like what goes on in the room next to mine—”

Moe’s lids spread to their fullest width. Was Rusty nuts? The guy that had the room next to Rusty’s was.... Moe shook his head. “Now look,” he said softly. What goes? The guy what’s got the coop next to yours is a sewing-machine salesman, or something like it.”

“Right!” Rusty’s palm slapped the counter in emphasis. “An’ that’s where my complaint comes in. All night long he sews. A man’s got to sleep.”

It was a legitimate complaint, Moe granted the other. But Moe couldn’t understand Rusty’s reason. After all, Rusty had had men who had lived to either side of him who had been drunkards, fighters, and plain loons. Certainly, and Moe could think of more than one incident, there had been more than one uproarious night,

nights which had ended with the wagon having to be called and the fighters, nightmare-havers, and loons taken off.

“....Sure,” Rusty said. “But a guy knew where he was at with those goonies. All I had to do was open one eye an’ one ear an’ I knew what was goin’ on. But this guy. It just goes, ‘click-click-click’ all night long. Don’t he ever sleep....?”

Rusty’s voice trailed off. The man under discussion had suddenly appeared as if from nowhere. Moe’s eyes became somnolent again. But their gaze was frankly curious under the leaden lids. Though the stranger had lived in the Mansion for some time, now, this was the first time Moe had ever see him.

There was absolutely nothing about the man to make another give him a second glance. He was the arch-type of absolute mediocrity. His clothes were darkly grey, his figure medium, his build the same, and his features had an odd blending of characteristics that made it seem as if the face were made of some greyish putty. He had a voice to match.

“Mister, er, Casey,” the man began, “I desire to register a complaint.”

“He wants to complain,” Rusty grunted in a low voice, yet which, because of its resonance, was heard by the other two.

“Yes,” said the stranger, without turning in Rusty’s direction, “I want to complain. I have a right to. There is, in the room to the immediate right of mine, a certain individual, who has been making the nights hideous for me. *I find it impossible to sleep.*”

Moe suddenly hid a grin behind a broad palm. This guy was complain-

ing about Rusty. The other went on:

"...I no sooner attempt sleep when he begins to snore. Now I'll admit a man has no control over such sounds, for no matter what side he may sleep on the noxious sound will issue. But this vile person, this utter impossibility, though I know he exists, has a snore the likes of which I have never heard. It is similar in sound to the so-called laugh of a hyena. But this is not darkest Africa. We are presuming that it is a civilized world, and no matter how low the grace of this hostelry, we are considered humans who inhabit the warrens, labeled, *rooms*...."

"Now-just-a-minute," Moe broke in. Where did this character get that? *Warrens*— Maybe it wasn't a high-class joint. But it was clean. "You got a complaint, mister. So, okay. The guy you're talkin' about is standin' right here. An' as far as I'm concerned, Rusty has been with us for fifteen years, an' you're the first guy what's ever sqwaked about his snorin'. Besides, Rusty just hollered a little on his own.

"How about that sewing machine of yours? Ain't the day long enough for you?"

The man suddenly smiled. It was an oddly pleasant smile, that is, for a man who had such a vitriolic tongue. It turned the blank face into something likeable. Rusty found himself answering the smile.

"Well," the man said, "perhaps I have been hasty. Let us say then, that our complaints cancel each other out. So you are the man with the snore....? I wonder if you will do me the goodness to come to my room?"

For a second Rusty hesitated. Then as the other continued to smile Rusty nodded his head in agreement. The man turned and started up the stairs to the second floor.

RUSTY looked about, his eyes narrowed in speculation. The room was exactly as his. A steel cot along one wall, a chair which could have been the twin of the one in his room, standing beside the cot, and in the center of the room, under the fixture with the single bulb, the steel-topped table, its surface stained and burned from countless cigarettes and alcohol droppings. What was on the table was what had caught Rusty's immediate attention. It was a sewing machine; it looked like any other he had seen that was a portable. A leather folder, open, lay alongside the machine.

The stranger was sitting alongside the bed, regarding Rusty with lazy glance. He saw a man slightly taller than the average, whose clothes were the cast-offs of various peoples, whose face was shadowed by the growth of several day's beard, a fact which made it look a bit vicious.

"So my sewing has kept you awake?" the stranger said. "Perhaps I can make it up to you?"

Rusty turned his head, his eyes narrowing even more, this time in suspicion. It sounded like he was going to be offered a job. And work, even the word, was anathema to Rusty. There had been but a single period in his life, a time he still remembered as something out of a nightmare, when Rusty was forced to work.

"How would you like to help me?" the man asked.

"What you mean?" Rusty asked.

"I need an assistant," the other said. "The job, and don't be frightened by the word, will pay very well. A hundred dollars a week."

Rusty had begun to shake his head in refusal, until the salary was mentioned. A hundred bucks a week. Holy yocky! That was a fortune!

"I'm listenin'." Rusty said.

"Good. Really," the other said, "all I need is someone who can understand basic English, the sounds and symbols. Now, I have some photographic equipment I use in my work. Your job will be to photograph certain people for whom I will make patterns, I saw these patterns during the night."

Rusty ran fingers across his stubbled chin; it sounded as if he was sandpapering the skin. So he was supposed to take pictures, eh? H'm. Easy enough. But why did this character pick on him? There was many a guy who dressed sharp, and had what it took. Why pick a floater from a flop joint like Moe's Mansion?

"I chose you," the man said, as if he had read Rusty's mind, "because another might become too curious, and possibly want to go on his own. I want the anonymous. Anonymity has a certain desirability. I like it. For instance, my name. It's Jones. What could be more the symbol of the commonplace than the name, Jones? Or my dress. I am like the wave, the wave that is exactly like its brother."

"I will buy you clothes, the same kind I wear. Grey is my mood, as it will become yours. Grey will suit you. You will be the shadow of a shadow. Will that please you?"

Rusty's mouth hung open. Never had he heard such talk. It frightened him oddly. There was something queer in this room. He felt his breath catch. There suddenly it was as if the sun had flooded every corner. And once more the two men were smiling into each other's eyes.

"Then we understand each other," the man named Jones said. "Good! Tomorrow we will attend to the matter of the clothes and the rest. Good night, my friend—"

Rusty nodded several times and stepped to the door. He passed the

table with the machine, and glanced down at the folder as he did. There were several dozen photos pasted on each page, just heads. He noticed that one of the photos was also on the machine. It lay just beyond the needle's point...

* * *

LIFE to Rusty from that night on was like being in wonderland all day and night. His work proved to be even simpler than Mr. Jones had spoken of. Once, sometimes twice a week, Rusty was called to Jones' room, given a small box-type camera, the address where he could find the subject, and told to get the picture. The subjects were usually ordinary people, a workman or his wife, a shop-girl, a baker, a plumber, a child, and once in a while someone from the society page.

Rusty would then put the camera in his jacket pocket; it was small enough to fit in the palm of his hand, and he would go to the address given. Only in the cases of where it was in an office would he have more than ease in getting his picture. But always Mr. Jones gave him the means of getting a snapshot.

Then all Rusty had to do was return the camera to Mr. Jones. From then on the day or night was his. For that he got a hundred dollars a week, every week.

This condition could have lasted indefinitely, had it not been for Rusty's one failing. He was as curious as a monkey looking into a mirror. He had been quick to note that other than the night Jones had invited him to his room, there had been no further invitations. When Rusty returned the camera Jones accepted it, stood facing Rusty at the threshold, and merely nodded his head that he was satisfied. Rusty had never seen what happened to the camera. Or to the negatives it contained. He won-

dered where and when Mr. Jones developed them, and what he used the developed print for.

One fact Rusty was sure of. Jones worked all night at his sewing. Therefore his days were free. So Rusty decided to watch and wait for the time when Mr. Jones left his room. The man had to eat. . . .

Whenever Mr. Jones wanted Rusty to work he would tap at his door either in the morning or evening. Rusty had never been called in the afternoon. Since he began to work for the strange man whose cloak was as he called it, 'anonymity' Rusty had learned to sleep afternoons. Rusty awoke this afternoon, shaved and prepared to go the coffee shop for his breakfast. He had donned his jacket when he heard Mr. Jones' door close. Footsteps padded past his door and after a second he could hear the man descend the stairs leading to the lobby. Rusty's eyes gleamed with sudden adventure.

Moe furnished keys for his regular customers. But a toothpick could have opened the doors. And one key was like another. As Moe said, "What could these guys have that anyone'd want?" It took a second and Rusty was in the other's room. There was a difference this time, for Rusty had not been asked.

His motions furtive, and careful, Rusty kept one ear on the outside the while he moved from one spot to another. The machine was covered and the folder closed. The camera lay on the bed. It was strange that though Rusty had come to investigate these very objects, he could not bring himself to them. He moved here and there, almost as if he were an animal, curious, working himself up to the point where his courage was equal to the task.

And when he did step to the ma-

chine it was an odd savagery that he ripped the cover from it. It looked harmless enough. The sunlight, filtering through the shredded shade, sent slivers of light from the chrome of the base. The needle was at the top of the foot. Rusty almost did not see the photo lying there. But as he stepped to one side he saw light reflecting from its glossy surface. He bent and looked long at the picture. He remembered the face. It was that of a bricklayer he had taken while the man was on the job.

Rusty's eyes narrowed in wonder when he saw why the photo lay where it did. Mr. Jones, Rusty decided then was a whole lot nuts. For it was apparent then, what Mr. Jones sewed. Miniature clothes for the bodies of the people Rusty photographed. Mr. Jones had cut away all portions of the photograph except the head. And from there on he sewed tiny garments. For a second Rusty speculated the why of it, then came to a quick decision. Stepping quickly to the bed he lifted the camera and held it to the light. It was strange but while he used it he had never been curious about it. Now on examination, Rusty concluded he had never seen a camera quite like it. For one thing it was a fourth of the conventional size. For another, it had no taking lens. Rusty had never noticed it before. Now on close examination he did. Then how could he take a picture, Rusty asked himself.

His fingers fiddled with a snap catch at the back of the camera, the while he pondered on the situation. Suddenly the back slid free and a rectangular piece of slick paper fell into his palm. He looked at it idly, then with absorbed interest. It was a photograph. One he had taken the night before in a night club, of the master of ceremonies. But here it was fully

developed. Rusty's lower lip came up to cover the upper. He thought he had it now. Mr. Jones was an inventor. He had invented a camera which could take and develop the picture at the same time. But what had that to do with sewing machines, and why was he making the tiny garments....?

Rusty slipped the photo back in place, put the cover on the machine again, stepped to the door and closed it softly behind him. Then he went down to the lobby. But the germ of something was born in his brain.

* * *

THE GERM grew into something concrete several days later. He was having coffee in the restaurant next door to the Mansion. The man seated next to him left his paper and Rusty began to leaf through it. He stopped when he came across a photo on the second page. It was a picture of one Sam Hillary, who had been killed the night before in a shooting at a night club. The photo was that of the man Rusty had taken a few days before. The shooting of Hillary, it turned out, was an accident. He had simply been in the line of fire.

So it said. But Rusty had other ideas.

From that day on Rusty filed away in his mind as many of the photos he took. And made some startling discoveries. Every now and then he saw the faces of some of these people in the newspapers. Invariably, they had died of violence. In fact Rusty discovered that not one met death by simply lying in bed.

It was then he decided that the hundred dollars a week should be doubled at least. He decided to talk it over with Mr. Jones. Nor had he long to wait. The evening of the night he came to the great decision Mr. Jones knocked on his door and called from behind the closed barrier that he had some work for him.

"Come in," called the impersonal voice.

Mr. Jones was seated at the machine, a position invariable with him, as Rusty well-knew.

"Rusty," Jones began, "I want you to...." He paused with lifted brows as Rusty found a seat on the bed. "Something wrong, Rusty?" Jones asked in concern.

"Yep! Somethin's sure wrong. Only it ain't with me," Rusty said.

A twisted smile broke on the other's mouth. "With me, eh?" Mr. Jones asked.

"Yep. That's why you an' me gotta have a talk," Rusty said, pleased as punch. Why, he thought, one look at this character and it was a cinch. He was angry that he hadn't thought of it before. Whatever this guy's racket, he was coining a fortune, to be able to pay a case note a week and not even miss it. Rusty decided to raise the ante to four hundred a week. And if the guy got smart, take the hog's share.

"Well, go ahead, Rusty," Mr. Jones said, as he bent again to the machine.

Click-click-click-click, the needle slipped in and out of the tiny piece of cloth.

"I can't figure out your racket, Jonesy," Rusty said carefully. "But I know somethin'. An' that is, the cops would sure like to talk to you, if they knew what I know."

"Really?" Mr. Jones asked. His voice held not the smallest note of curiosity.

"You heard me, wise guy!" Rusty's voice became sharp. He didn't like the other's attitude. "So better get smart. I want some more sugar...."

"Rusty," Mr. Jones broke in, "you were in here the other afternoon, weren't you? And in your curiosity you made a superficial examination of the machine, the camera and the folder."

"So-o....?" Rusty brazened it out.

"Nothing, Rusty. Just that I want you to know I knew of your visit. Would you step over here please?"

Rusty did as the other asked. Jones did not look up. He was engrossed completely in his sewing. And after a while Rusty too, saw nothing but what the other was doing. The peculiar thing was that Mr. Jones was actually doing nothing. The machine was doing it all. Mr. Jones merely placed the cut out head of the subject so that the edge was where the needle would sew over it. From there on the machine did the rest. The bobbin whirled and the thread fed into the foot and through the needle and after a while a suit or dress was formed, to the smallest detail. And after the photo was clothed the machine automatically rejected it.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" Mr. Jones broke the silence at last. "The camera which prints its own pictures, the sewing machine which makes its own garments. Science has made one, the camera, the machine is my own invention.

"Rusty, I think it is time you learned to take over the operation of the machine...."

All Rusty could say to that was, "Huh?"

"Yes, Rusty. I have been called to other tasks, therefore I appoint you to this one. Now listen closely. This is a very important thing we do here. Very important indeed. Oh, yes! Now you will do all things, take the photos, and after, sew the garments on them...."

THINGS were happening too fast for Rusty. What he had come to talk about, to browbeat the other, had somehow slipped into the background. He tried to bring it back:

"Now look here, Jonesy—"

"Later!" Mr. Jones head had lifted

suddenly and his eyes seemed looking into distances beyond the limits of Earthly space. "Later. We have things to do. Rusty; there is a great power placed in your hands. I have no time to explain...."

Rusty lost his head then. Who the hell did this little shmoose think he was, telling him what to do? Rusty's hands suddenly twisted themselves into the thin folds of flesh on Mr. Jones' throat. Mr. Jones made no effort to remove the strangling fingers. Rusty's mouth became a twisted bloodless line and anger boiled in raging madness in his breast.

"We'll talk now," Rusty grunted. "I been takin' your guff too long. You been knockin' people off. I been readin' the papers. I seen the pictures.... Talk up, mister!"

"...Look at their eyes," Mr. Jones said, and smiled crookedly. "They are the marked ones. You have become the messenger of Death.... Do not abuse that power...."

"Talk sense!" Rusty grunted and squeezed tighter. Mr. Jones closed his eyes, as if in weariness. He never opened them again. Rusty had no consciousness of the power of his fingers' grip. Death had come quickly for Mr. Jones....

Rusty stepped away from the corpse. His breath whistled shrilly in his throat. It couldn't be. He stepped to the opposite side of the table and looked closely at what had been the man known as Mr. Jones. No. There was no doubt of it. Mr. Jones was in the past tense. Fear struck in quick waves at Rusty, fear and panic too. He wanted to run from this nothingness seated at the machine. But to where? If only he could get rid of Mr. Jones. He started to move the corpse, but his hands fell away from the other as soon as they touched the flesh. He felt nausea rise in him and turned from the sight of the dead

man. His eyes fell on the camera and folder.

They held a fascination so deep for him he forgot the dead man. There was something he had to do, something about the camera. He staggered rather than walked to the bed and picked up the camera in trembling fingers. He flipped the snap open and pulled out the print that was there. He held it face down in his palm. He afraid suddenly to look at it.

A strangled gasp came from his lips when he finally did turn it over. The face it showed was that of Mr. Jones! He slumped to the bed, and his fingers fell on the folder. His brain was numb with fear. As if his fingers did the bidding of another's mind, they fell to turning the pages.

"...Look at their eyes..." the words came to him as from a distance. And he understood what the words meant. The eyes in each photo were were the eyes of a dead person....

Suddenly a bell rang somewhere.

Suddenly a bell rang somewhere, the room began to spin, his body felt as if it were being twisted and torn in every nerve and muscle, a strangled cry of terror and pain rose in his throat. He clutched at his throat, his eyes rolled horribly in their sockets and he fell backward.

* * *

THE ROOM was dark when he opened his eyes. He felt as if he had been on a rack. He staggered forward, felt his thighs hit something and grabbed for the object. He knew by the feel he was by the steel table. His fingers reached upward and felt for the chain pull on the light fixture. Pale yellow light flooded the room as he pulled at it. And Rusty looked about him in amazement. The room looked exactly as he had seen it last before he had lost his senses. Except for one thing. Mr. Jones. He was no longer there. Rusty turned this way and that, yet knew he was

being a fool. There was absolutely no place where Mr. Jones could hide.

Rusty's glance fell to the sewing machine. He bent and stared at the picture beneath the needle. And as he looked, the machine began its clicking sound, the bobbin began its furious spinning, and the thread moved through the needle and into the picture. And after a moment the machine rejected the photo and stopped its clicking.

The photo was that of Mr. Jones, dressed as he had been as Rusty had last seen him.

As if a clap of thunder exploded in Rusty's mind, the mystery was solved. Mr. Jones had invented a machine of death. Rusty did not ask the why of it. That was Mr. Jones' business. But Rusty knew then how the thing worked. First you took the subject's picture. And when you wanted the man or woman to die, you simply placed the photo under the needle. Something in the machine did the rest.

And Mr. Jones had disappeared. The machine, folder, camera was Rusty's for the taking. Yes, Rusty thought, mine for the taking. And what a racket I can work with this. But I've got to get out of here. Take this stuff with me to another hotel and set up shop. He felt for his money, pulled it out, counted it and saw he had a bit more than two hundred dollars. It was more than enough.

The corridor was empty. Rusty lugged the sewing machine down the stairs, the folder under one arm and the camera in his jacket pocket. The night clerk looked at him with sleepy eyes but said nothing as Rusty walked through the door. It was the last Moe's Mansion saw of him.

A cruising cab took him to a hotel on the near-north side. He registered under the name of Sam Jones, though

why he did it he did not know. The name popped into his mind. But after he did it, it came to him how much like Mr. Jones he had become. As Mr. Jones had once said, "You will be the shadow of a shadow."

TONY MALONEY was the biggest lookie in the midwest. Some even said in the whole country. His enemies said he was the most *hated* man in the whole country. They hated him because he took tribute from every other lookie, his word was law and his pay-off to the law enforcing agencies of towns and cities ran into the hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. But there wasn't a dollar bet on a horse or sporting event some part of which did not eventually find its way into Tony's pocket.

Yet, powerful as he was, he had learned early in his business to be available to even the smallest man. It gave him the feeling of a baron, when he dispensed his largesse to some poor sucker who had lost a buck at one of his book joints. He invariably carried a handful of half dollars which he used to toss out to whoever came for a small loan.

So it was that when one of his musclemen opened the inner door to the office behind the cigar store on Lake Street, he wasn't surprised to see the figure of a rather nondescript man in a grey suit standing on the threshold.

"Well, let him in Jack," Tony belated. He was sitting in his shirt sleeves, his feet on the desk, a huge black cigar rolled in a corner of his mouth and his eyes half-shut against the smoke which curled ceilingward.

"Mr. Maloney?" the stranger asked. Tony nodded and the man went on: "My name is Jones, Sam Jones. I'm a photographer."

Tony stopped smiling and his henchmen sat a bit straighter in his

chair. Tony had a deep aversion for the camera.

"Yeah!" Tony grunted, his fingers stilled from rolling the silver. "So get out of here. I don't like photographers."

"I don't wanta take your picture," said Rusty. "I want to take his."

"Yeah? Why?"

"Because I'd like to show it to you," Rusty replied. His lips were twisted in a slow grin. He had planned this very well. Tony was as well-known as the President of the country. And Rusty had decided Tony's money was going to be split two ways, with Rusty taking the major share of it.

"Beat it!" Tony said shortly.

Neither saw the camera in Rusty's palm. But as the henchman started forward Rusty revealed it. "Hold it," Rusty said mildly. The muscle kept coming but stopped at an imperceptible gesture from the man behind the desk.

Rusty flipped the caten pulled the print out and showed it to Tony. Tony glanced at it turned his eyes upward and said, "So what?"

"Look at his eyes," Rusty said.

Tony frowned. Gees! Harry's eyes sure looked funny. Like they were, like they were the eyes of a dead man. What Tony did not know was that Rusty had snapped his picture while he looked at the other.

"So what're you tryin' to show me?" he asked.

"A picture. I'm trying to sell 'em," Rusty said.

"Sell it to him," Tony said.

"No," Rusty said. "I'd rather sell it to you. I'll give you a ring tomorrow, Mister Maloney. Maybe tomorrow, you'll buy it."

"Beat it, you," Tony said, his voice sharp with anger. Suddenly he was tired of this character.

Rusty shrugged his shoulders,

smiled politely and left. The sewing machine had some work to do.

* * *

THE PHONE rang sharply and Tony lifted it from its cradle. The crackling voice seemed familiar yet somehow, strange. Then he recognized it. The goofy photographer.

"Tony..Tony?"

"Yeah. What the hell do you want?"

"Just to hear how you felt about your strong-arm boy, Harry. Too bad..."

A frown worried the skin on Tony's forehead. He had just heard about Harry. The guy had gotten drunk an hour before, and had rammed head on into a street car. Killed instantly. He wondered idly how the other had heard about it. Not even the newspapers could have it.

"...Dead, isn't he...?" the voice in the phone went on.

"Yeah. How did you know?"

"I know a lot. Y'know that young fella takin' the bets in your cigar store. The one with the scar on his face. He's just gotten off of work. He's gonna die in about ten minutes: I took his picture this afternoon, just before I took Harry's.. and yours!"

"Mine..." Tony let loose a string of invectives across the wires.

"Don't get mad," the voice said. "The guy's gonna die in ten minutes. Better get him if you don't believe me..." The wire went dead.

Tony sat quiet at his desk for a full minute. Suddenly he made up his mind. He took his feet off the desk, stepped around it and walked into the cigar store. A number of the men standing about talking called to him. He nodded, called a number of names in greeting, but searched for the boy with the scarred face. The boy was a second cousin of his. Not seeing him, he asked the manager how long he had been gone.

"Just left, Tony," the man said. "But if you want him he usually stops across the street for a coke before getting the street car."

Why Tony started to run he could not say. But he was going full speed when he hit the corner. He was just in time to see the boy come out of the drug store on the corner.

"Tommy! Tommy!" his voice rose above the traffic noises.

Tommy turned at the sound of his name, saw his cousin, smiled and nodded that he was coming, at the other's frantic wave. The light was with him as he stepped off the curb. He didn't bother to look. So he never saw the speeding car which suddenly turned the corner. He felt the steel drive into him, then felt no more...

"Where'ja go, Tony?" the manager asked, when Tony returned. "There's been some guy tried to get you. Something about a picture he took of Tommy. Said he'd call back..." he stopped at the grey look in Tony's face and the wintry ice in the eyes. The man swallowed hastily. Whoever had caused it was going to find himself wishing he was anywhere else but on the same planet with Tony, the manager knew from past experiences.

The phone started its jangle just as Tony stepped into the room. He knew who was on the other end of the wire even before he lifted it.

"...Tony? Tony?" the voice asked.

"Look!" Tony's voice was ill-repressed with fury. "I don't know who you are, or where you are. But I'll get you, if it's the last thing I do..."

"Don't be a fool," the voice said mildly. "You'll be dead. Dead, Tony, long before you get me. You'll be dead in the next five minutes if I want you to die now. Just like Harry and the kid. No, Tony. I don't want to die and I don't want you to die,

either. We can work together. So I'm coming to see you, Tony, tonight.

"Just don't think about bumping me, Tony. It won't work. Because I have you all set up. You too might die tonight, tomorrow, the day after. You'll never know when, or how. But you can't escape. Unless you play ball with me."

The line went dead. Yet it seemed the voice was still in the room. It was no good answering the voice now, Tony thought. No. Better to keep quiet and find out what it was all about. His blood still boiled in the remembrance of the dead boy he had cradled in his arms. The son of his cousin, a man he had loved, the man to whom he'd promised to look after his son. The blood of Tommy Maloney called for vengeance. It would come....

* * *

THE DOOR opened and the man in the grey suit walked in. There was the same crooked grin on his lips. The hooded eyes of the man behind the desk blinked in greeting.

"Now don't be angry," Rusty said mildly. "I just wanted to prove something to you, Tony. I did it the hard way. But we gotta learn. Now look at this...." He slid a small photo across the desk.

Tony glanced at it, his eyes suddenly sharp. It was a photo of his biggest rival, a man from whom even Tony sometimes had to take an order.

"I made a little shroud for our friend tonight," Rusty said. "I saw you have a radio here. Turn it on. Maybe there'll be some interesting news...."

Tony switched it on to a station which carried news flashes on the half hour. They had not long to wait.

"...The police," came the announcement after the usual worldwide, and national news, "of any num-

ber of cities will breath a sigh of relief at the news of the death of Al Jennings, just a half hour ago. The notorious hoodlum, gambler, and tough, was killed in a strange accident. He had just stepped out of his hotel when the body of a man plunging in a suicide leap struck him. Jennings was killed instantly, as was the man intent on suicide...."

There was more but Tony had no ear for it. His breast was filled with savage satisfaction. With Jennings out of the way there would be no one who could halt his sway over the underworld of the nation. Then he caught a glimpse of the man standing near the door. And Tony's eyes went wide in fear. This man had killed Jennings, he knew. How he did it was a mystery. By what strange power he possessed, Tony had no knowledge. Yet Tony knew this man in the grey clothes had the power of life and death.

And for the first time Tony saw that the photo on the desk had something attached to it. A tiny garment hung from it. A shroud-like garment....

"So maybe we'll talk business, Tony," Rusty said. "I have the power to kill and never be caught. Any one who gets in our way, dies. Just like that. Fifty-fifty, Tony, from now on."

As if in a trance, Tony replied, "Fifty-fifty."

* * *

IT WAS Rusty's first taste of real power. He moved into larger, more sumptuous quarters, but always the sewing machine and the camera and folder went with him. And after a while he became a bit sated with it. For Rusty had never known a great need for money. It meant nothing to him. Power, however, the power to rule people's lives meant a great deal more. To have the knowledge, and impart it to others, that Death

was at Rusty's fingertip call, was the greatest thrill of all.

As Tony's partner he came to know power. But after a while it no longer satisfied. His power was over small men, small people. Rusty wanted the power of rule, not alone of gamblers and petty city officials, but of larger men and officials. So he set about it.

The machines of Destiny did not fail him. And only Tony knew about the camera. The sewing machine was still a mystery. But that the camera had something to do with Death, Tony had more than an idea.

Soon the name of Sam Jones became a by-word. First as a partner of the notorious Tony Malone, then as a power in the city, and later a power in the state. Men curried his favor, begged for the crumbs of his leavings. Rusty loved it. There was but one man who did not curry favor, one man who openly denounced Rusty. That man was Senator Griggs.

Rusty and Tony still had their office behind the cigar store. The two were seated there one day, talking over the senator.

"He talks too much," Rusty said.

"He always did," Tony remarked. "But he's one guy too big for me to fool with. And maybe too big for you, too."

"Nobody's too big for me," Rusty said. "Y'know. I think I'd like being Senator."

Tony grinned crookedly. Yet it was a bitter grin. Experience had taught him that this grey-clothed man got what he wanted. "Well, his term's just begun. So you'll have to wait a few years for that."

"The Governor and I are just like that," Rusty said, holding one finger over another.

"So-o?" Tony said.

"Griggs might die, you know. Sort of unexpectedly. I have his picture. Have had it for a long time."

"Go on," Tony said.

"Well, the Governor wouldn't refuse me a favor, would he? Like being the new Senator from this state. Say! Not a bad idea. I might even get to be President. Hey! How about that? President Sam Jones. Sounds all right with me..."

Tony gave the other a sharp glance. No, by all that was holy! Jones wasn't fooling. If Griggs died, he *would* demand the Governor appoint him as Senator. And from there... Tony grew a little frightened. It could be done, Tony knew. Jones could become President.

"H'm," Rusty's voice broke in on Tony's thoughts. "I think I'll run up to the State capitol. Be back the day after tomorrow."

"You mean...?" Tony paused.

"Maybe. See you in a couple of days. And I *think*," Rusty paused, gave the other a sidelong glance and went on, "I think you're going to be the sole controller of this racket, when I get back. Bet you'll like that, eh?"

Tony shook his head. He was still shaking his head when Rusty walked through the door. But Rusty would not have walked with so jaunty a step had he known what was on Tony's mind. Rusty had become very careless as time went on. At first he had lived with the careful way of a spy in the enemy's headquarters. But power and the consciousness of it had dulled his senses to the point where he had come to leaving his room unlocked.

Tony had learned of it one day. He waited only for that moment when Sam Jones would be away just long enough for Tony to get what he wanted out of the room.

* * *

THE FINGER of light picked out the painting and stopped there. A sibilant sound told of suddenly re-

leased breath. The path of light broadened until almost the whole wall was taken into the path of it. Then the figure behind the light stepped into the picture. A wide, hairy-backed hand reached out, pulled the painting to one side and revealed the large wall safe behind it. Thick fingers fiddled with the combination, and after a moment the door opened on well-oiled hinges. The hand reached in. When it reappeared it was holding a small camera.

The camera disappeared into the jacket pocket of the man holding the flashlight. As quickly as it had come on the light went off. And Tony Maloney walked from Sam Jones' room, leaving behind the echoes of his choking laughter. . . .

Rusty walked into their office, his grey-clothed figure oddly filled with an electric something. Tony, face immobile, eyes enigmatic, sat behind the plan office desk, his feet in their accustomed place, and the inevitable cigar stuck in one corner of his mouth.

"Well, Tony," Rusty said, "It won't be long now."

Tony's flat, expressionless eyes flickered. It was the only sign of life he showed.

"I suppose you read this morning's paper?" Rusty asked.

Tony's head went up and down.

"Yeah. Poor old Griggs. Too bad. Imagine that? A truck running up over the sidewalk and killing him. . . ." Rusty's lips made a clacking sound of shock.

"The paper said he died a hero." Tony said. "Grabbed his grandchild in his arms and tried to shield her with his body. But she died too. . . ."

Rusty's shoulders heaved in a shrug. It was one of those things. Rusty knew only that the one in the photo died. He had no control over

the deaths of others. . . . How the hell was he to know the old man was going to take his grandchild shopping?

Tony's right hand, concealed below the edge of the desk came into the light. A small, box-shaped camera was held upright in the palm. There was the faint sound of a shutter's release. And Tony grinned broadly.

"A long time. A damned long time I've waited for this!" his voice rose in thick exultation. "I never thought I'd get hold of this thing. But I did! And now, mister, *your* picture is in this little box. And I can tell you what you once told me, that one day you're going to die. Maybe in the next ten minutes, or the next half hour. Maybe you'll be crossing the street, like my nephew did. . . or maybe a truck'll come up on the sidewalk, like with Senator Griggs. . . . But I've got you!"

Rusty's mind worked with the speed of light. He had been to his room. The sewing machine was still on the stand; he had noticed it. But he hadn't bothered to look into the safe. So Tony had managed to get the camera. But he didn't know the camera alone was useless. A bargain had to be struck, and quickly.

"So okay, Tony," Rusty said in guarded accents. "We're even. I've got your picture and you've got mine. So how about the camera? I could. . . ." he stopped and bit his lip. Damn! He had given himself away.

Tony's grin grew even wider. What a character this guy was, he thought. Give *him* the camera. Hah! Tony's finger released the snap and the back came away. He reached in, pulled out the snapshot and looked at it. Rusty saw the other's eyes go wide and set. And like a flash he acted. In a diving leap he was across the width of the desk and tearing the print from Tony's suddenly lax fing-

ers.

Rusty took a couple of quick steps backward and shot a hurried glance at the print. His voice boomed in laughter as he looked at it.

"Ho-ho! Now ain't that something? It's a blank! Poor Tony! You'd make a hell of a photographer. Can't even use a camera. Nothing came out. So that still leaves me top-dog..."

Tony's lips moved and the curses rolled out in horrible invectives. Then he rose, threw the camera down and stamped on it until it was jammed bit of wreckage beneath his feet.

"That's all right, Tony," Rusty said in sobered tones. "I was tired of snapping pictures anyway. I got enough in my files. And to show you I don't carry grudges, you can still run this deal all by yourself. Me, I got to get back to the State capitol. The Governor'll be wanting to see me..."

* * *

RUSTY started to turn the key in the lock and hesitated for a long second. There was a peculiar clicking sound behind the door. Then the bolt shot back and Rusty opened the door.

"Well, then," came a familiar voice. "It's about time."

Rusty felt his lower lip tremble. The hackle rose on his neck and his body quivered in sudden fear. For seated on a chair, the sewing machine on a small table before him, was Mr. Jones.

"It's draughty," Mr. Jones said sharply. "Come in and close the door."

"I—I thought you were—were dead," Rusty quavered.

"You *did*!" Mr. Jones' voice rose slightly. "How odd. What made you think so?"

"Because I killed you," Rusty shrieked. "I killed you! Get out of here. You're dead..."

Click-click-click-click went the needle in the machine, and the bobbin whirled and the cloth spun out in its pattern under the needle, and the man bent low over his work, his eyes only on what he was doing...

"Rusty," Mr. Jones said without looking away from his work, "You've caused me a considerable amount of anxiety and unnecessary labor. I was given a very important bit of work to do. That was why I appointed you as my assistant."

"When I did I told you that this work you were going to do carried a certain amount of power and not to abuse it. I regret, and very much so, that you have abused it sorely. It was brought to my attention. More, I was taken away from a more important task to return to doing this. Now I must train another assistant. So much foolishness..."

Rusty took hold of himself. He remembered the camera was no longer in existence. This guy couldn't harm him. Rusty made up his mind then. Mr. Jones was going to die, but for good this time. He moved forward on cautious steps until he stood above the table. He looked down and saw the face on the photograph. It was that of Tony. A lopsided grin split Rusty's mouth. So Tony was going to get it in the neck anyway.

"Yes," Mr. Jones went on as if he were not aware of the other's presence. "You are being taken from this work and being given new duties. On another sphere, in another world, a much warmer world. But disobedience and self-worship carries strict penalties in our work. You will be notified shortly..."

Rusty acted then. His hand shot out and closed on the throat of the man seated at the machine.

"Got ya!" Rusty grunted. "This time you're really going to die. The camera's broke. So you can't kill me."

But I can kill you."

It was the strangest thing. Mr. Jones merely smiled under the pressure of Rusty's fingers. And they fell away from his throat.

"Oh, that camera!" Mr. Jones said. "I have another."

"So, okay," Rusty grunted hoarsely. "So take my picture. I don't care. I ain't afraid. Nothing'll come out..."

"But of course not," Mr. Jones said amiably. "Only the living show

on the print..."

Choking laughter spilled from Rusty's lips. Only the living showed on the print. What a gag, what a joke. No! His voice rose in a scream! "NO! N-nooooo..." and died away.

There was a ringing of bells, a feeling like he was being lifted and carried away in space, and after a moment an odor of burning sulphur, and horrible, unbearable heat....

THE END

YES OR NO — ONE OR ZERO



By LESTER FLETCHER



EVERYONE is familiar with the denary or decimal system of notation which we use in all our calculations. In order to express any number, no matter how large or small, we use ten digits, zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, and a system of positional notation. We use this method without thinking. It is said to have originated because of the fact that we have ten fingers.

But it is possible to create and use a number system with any number of digits ranging from two to any number we wish. It has even been suggested that we adopt a twelve digit system because it would make working with fractions easier. It is, as has been pointed out, possible to use merely two digits, zero and one, to make a complete numerical system. No one would suggest using this system because the expression of large numbers becomes rather unwieldy and tedious. In the binary system, as it is called, the number *one hundred* on the denary system becomes in symbols, 1,100,100. Apparently there is not much advantage in this technique.

Strangely enough however the binary system is being used a great deal these days in a place where one would hardly think it likely—mathematical calculating machines. Let us consider this. Remember that in the binary system there are only two symbols, no more zero and one.

Mathematical calculating machines are made up of relays and vacuum tubes. What can a relay or a vacuum tube be made to "say" or "do"? Well, a relay can be in one of two states; its contacts maybe *open* or *closed*; a vacuum tube may conduct cur-

rent or it may not conduct current. There are, in each case, two distinct possibilities or choices for the devices.

How convenient for us! Let a closed relay represent *one*; an open relay represent *zero*. Let a conducting tube represent *one*; a non-conducting tube represent *zero*. Do you see the splendid relationship there? We have two excellent electrical and mechanical representations of our binary number system. Combining and operating with numbers *zero* and *one*, reduces to the operation of relays and vacuum tubes—and that is how most complex "electronic brains" make use of the binary system.

Of course number in the denary system must be translated into binary numbers before being fed to the machines and the answers must be changed back, but this is an easy process. The first five digits in the denary system are represented in the binary system by these numbers—1, 10, 11, 100, 101. While they look awkward—and are—to the machine they are the terms it can come to grips with. The binary system is the number language of the machine. For ordinary simple calculating machines used in business, the denary system is used in the machine—and it is quite complicated. But in the artificial brains used in science, in automatic gun-directors and so on, the binary system is the only one.

It is also impressive to think that a mere two digits suffice to express any number no matter how large—there's a lot of work to writing it, so it looks as if for ordinary work we'll stick to the good old denary system!

THE END

ALBERT SWEIZER— ★ GENIUS ★

★ By ROBERT WASTIME ★

IN THE NEXT few months the United States is going to be host to a visitor from French Equatorial Africa. The occasion is the bicentennial of the famous German poet-philosopher, Johan Wolfgang Goethe. The visitor is one of the world's authorities on Goethe. But he is more than that. He is the last human to whom the phrase "universal genius" can be applied. He is truly a great man.

Schweizer is a first rate musician, a skilled medical doctor, a literary authority, a marvelous administrator and a man versed in almost everything; he is similar to the geniuses of the Renaissance; he is the modern Leonardo Da Vinci!

He came as a missionary and theologian to French Equatorial Africa about thirty-four years ago, but he saw that the natives needed physical rehabilitation before theological, and so he became a skilled doctor and surgeon, working under the most primitive conditions and with the most pitiful tools. But will and strength of character made him elevate the miserable status of the natives until now his work and his large hospital is a tribute to his genius.

Albert Schweizer has been active in so many fields and has done such outstanding work in all of them—without any publicity or ballyhoo until recently—that no person of comparable quality can be found with whom to compare him.

He is regarded in the same light today as were the great figures of the Renaissance, the time when men were skilled in everything they undertook, and when men were not basically specialists as is the case today.

It is impossible, with the exception of Schweizer, to think of any man today who has exhibited the same qualities. Schweizer's influence in his works and books will exist long after the details of the specialists are forgotten. Schweizer is truly a man of the ages.

One of the troubles with modern civilization today, a difficulty which is becoming progressively worse, is that no one man do much outside a given branch of a specific field. Thus we have great chemists and physicists and writers and artists—but no combinations of these. There is so much to learn and know that one man can do no more than digest a small part of it all. It is one of the penalties we pay for having advanced so rapidly to such complexities.

Right now, in the science of theoretical physics, what is needed is a man with a universal grasp of the basic things in the science, a man who can correlate the million different aspects of the subject; in other words, a man "who can see the forest for the trees." Let us hope that such a man is produced in our times. Possibly in the field of politics, we have seen such a man already—Winston Churchill—but in spite of his vast authority and power, he was powerless to change the events which led to the present state of world affairs.

Maybe if Man breaks free of this planet, which he is certain to do within our lifetimes, the realization of his state will cause him to produce such a universal, all-knowing genius, instead of mere "technicians!"

THE END

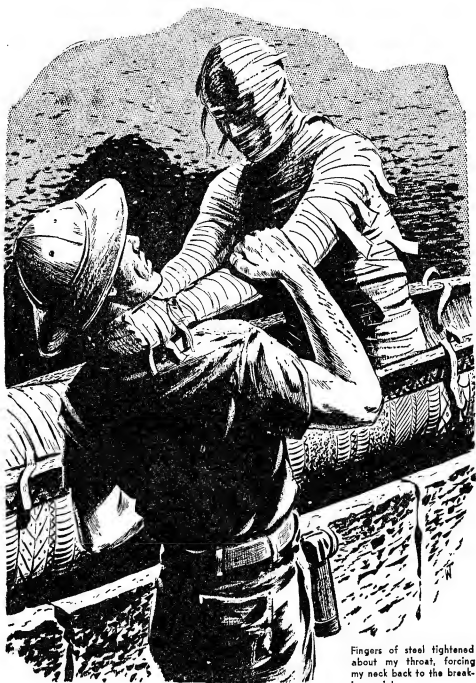
STRANGE CORN

★ By GILBERT NYE ★

SOME RATHER strange corn which was found in New Mexico is being carefully studied by scientists. The well-preserved ears may be 4,000 years old, and are the closest thing to wild corn ever found. The ears are only two inches long and not more than half an inch thick. The ears are not enclosed in husks and each kernel has its own covering. Perhaps these tiny ears can help to solve the mystery as to where corn originated. Although corn is one of our

main grains, we do not know when or how man discovered wild corn or how he happened to make use of it. Corn is probably a native of America. Botanists think that it originated in what is now Mexico, and that it spread from there to other parts of the world. Many years before the white man came to this continent, corn was being cultivated here. The Indians first taught the pilgrims how to raise corn and in many cases it kept the early pioneers from starvation.

THE AVENGER



Fingers of steel tightened about my throat, forcing my neck back to the breaking point.

By NORMA LAZELL EASTON

Do we live again? Is there anything to the idea of reincarnation? Did the Avenger come out of the mists of time—to kill again?

HE HAD ALL been waiting for it since sundown.

A far-off weird cry rising from the desert darkness. And then it came... Higher and higher it climbed in intensity. Kit's eyes told me he was on the verge of hysteria. They should have looked blue, but his pupils were so dilated that they looked as black as the Professor's. I fingered the map of Thebes rolled before me on the bare table. A small dot, surrounded with red penciling, showed where our location was in the desert, three hundred miles from the Nile. The Professor had been scuffling with the inside flap of our hot stuffy tent.

The three of us stood electrified, waiting for that screaming to die, yet dreading to hear it end. Each of us knew that when that gripping scream stopped, one more of our group would be dead, killed by the spirit of the "Avenger", a century-dead Egyptian.

Kit was the first to move forward, but I grabbed his arm.

"Wait!" I said and my voice grated in my ears like the desert sands. "The natives will tell us soon enough."

Even as I spoke, around the tent, shadows were scuttling past us, heading for the mouth of the excavation.

Professor Curtis Mortimer, the most noted archaeologist of these times, looked at me approvingly. "This is no place for an impulsive youngster like you, Kit," he taunted. "If you dash headlong into danger, the 'Avenger' may even get you!"

Kit swung away from the Professor and started rolling a cigarette. His fingers were shaking. I smiled, hop-

ing to reassure Kit, but my mouth muscles were tense. Kit was my younger brother by seven years.

"This standing by," Kit rasped, "and letting a bunch of spirits run our show gets me down! Are we mice or are we men! I don't believe all this tripe about the dead avenging themselves. I'm not afraid of any perfumed mummy or threats either. Why don't we DO something?"

But even as he spoke, I saw him shiver.

And I didn't blame him. A peculiar, indescribable odor drifted to us from the excavation. The smell of ancient embalming herbs and strange seductive incense mingled with our modern antiseptics.

"You wanted to come, Kit," I reminded him.

"Well, you and the professor are used to all this. And what you can see in it, is more than I can. No wonder Karen hates all this work, and wants you home, instead."

Kit was right on that score, and thinking of Karen made me desperately lonely. We had only been married a few years, but I knew that if this trip was successful, I would never have to be separated from her again.

"You wouldn't have us give up now, surely." The Professor's black eyes snapped. "This promises to be the greatest find in history. It will be the richest accumulation of old gold and jewels ever uncovered in Egypt."

KIT HAD not been in on the opening of King Seti's and Tutank-

hamen's sarcophagus, but to his boyish mind, this work had taken on an exaggerated glory of adventure. That was why I had let him come on this trip with me.

Kit did not believe in any of those ancient warnings, nor the strange manner in which the men of those past expeditions had met with death! Headlines around the world had acquainted all people with the fact that none of them had died naturally. Only the professor remained to return to the jaunts into the land of the dead. I could see that here in these strange surroundings it was not so easy for Kit to dispel his growing fear.

"So you've lost your yen for adventure?" I demanded, for while quips from the Professor angered Kit, taunts from me seemed to make him rally. "You're not boasting now that you'll bring back King Tut's gold-filled teeth?"

"Don't kid me, Stan," he cried. "Even if you are my brother, remember, I don't take threats from any living man. I couldn't accept all this tosh before, but somehow, the dead have given us proof that they meant business in keeping us out of this tomb."

Kit's words were drowned by a rising mumble from Arabs pressing into the tent and motioning us to come into the darkness. We followed them wordlessly. Dr. Lowe and other members of the Staff joined us from the neighboring tents. As if by mutual agreement, we kept close together.

The Arabs pressed us to the entrance of the Lower Level, and by flashlight, we saw the figure of an Arab. In his clenched hand he grasped the statuette of the Egyptian God, the "Avenger". Shimmering lights shot across the stark desert night, making grotesque shadows play across the body. The cry of

jackals and hyenas came shrilly to our ears, for they, in their own mysterious way had been informed that the blood from the new-dead sifted through the porous sands.

I was sickened by the horror stamped on his lifeless face, and a wild fury shook me.

The Arabs shrank back and in a phase peculiar to their religion, formed a circle about the corpse turning their backs upon it. It was up to Kit, Professor Mortimer, Dr. Lowe and myself to dispose of him, for no low caste Arab may touch a body, for they believe this damns its spirit.

In civilized areas we would have demanded an investigation, but here at Thebes, the wisest thing to do was to bury the dead and ask no questions. While Dr. Lowe explained to the natives that the Arab had died of heart disease, none of us gave credence to his words.

"Turn the flash out," Kit begged, "and let's get on with it."

The horror on Kit's face reflected that on the dead Arab. The two of us picked up the body, no one making any move to touch the small gold statue. We moved northward toward a mound which mutely testified that the threats of the dead do have their own results.

Kit was breathing hard under his share of the burden, and the sound unnerved me.

"Take it easy, fella," I suggested. Kit grunted.

I was used to prying into crypts, to shuddering over the inscriptions on the tombs and wondering, to fortifying myself against the treacherous animosity of the Egyptians who followed up their feelings with corresponding deeds. They thought us little better than thieves who sacked the graves of their ancestors and I suppose in a small measure, they were right.

I RECOGNIZED only too well the feeling Kit was experiencing. That cold tightening of the muscles at the back of your neck...the nameless terror that made the muscles in your legs like water, and the horror bringing a smarting blindness to the back of the eyes.

But I knew that all these things could and must be conquered if you would be a scientist. These men were well repaid, for men who searched for facts and relics to bring the past alive know an unequaled excitement with the uncovering of ancient alabaster, lapis lazuli, gold and glistening jewels from the tombs. After a time, Kit would not mind, I hoped, the whispering of the winds that swooped down around the pyramids and across the death-like sands.

From across the clearing we could hear the fitful playing of the Arabs on their instruments. I knew it was the death dirge.

"Can't you make them stop that awful strumming?" Kit demanded. "If they have to play, why can't they just once play something we know."

"It certainly sounds off-key," Professor Mortimer agreed. "I think the players take delight in reminding us in their subtle way that we do not belong here."

A new and definite plan of action was forming in my thoughts as we carried our dead burden to its resting place. The others of our party of twelve followed close behind. Dr. Lowe swung a spade he had picked up from outside the excavation.

"It will not be difficult to prepare this grave, Kit," the Professor said. "And the rites are simple." We all helped in such tense silence that we could almost feel one another's thoughts.

They were expecting me to put a stop to this wholesale murder business and I knew it was time to reveal

a definite plan of action.

"We'd better go back to my tent," I suggested with a calmness that I did not feel.

The natives again cleared the way before us. They were looking at me, too, expectantly. We entered the main tent. It was natural that the Professor, Kit and I should take the lead and seat ourselves at the small table.

As I looked over the strange group with its secretive silence, I was filled with foreboding. There was Dr. Lowe who had been on three trips with me, Jim the cook, who had been on five, the photographer, Blake, sent from the museum, Ed. Houston, the historian whom I had known casually for many years. Then there was Professor Mortimer who had worked with all the others on his previous trips. Most of them were strangers to me before this expedition.

"Well, Doc," I said, noticing his fidgeting fingers, "you should be able to explain what caused these deaths by now. Two natives in the past week, and now this!"

"You know as much about it as I do," he countered, looking at me wearily. "And you know I had no chance even to examine this last one."

"No matter how he died," Kit volunteered, "it's a cinch that spooks didn't put that statue in his hand. And whoever did that is taking advantage of our being superstitious!"

"Why don't we send all the natives back to Cairo," Dr. Lowe suggested.

Professor Mortimer shook his head. "That would only simplify things for whoever is trying to scare us off," he argued, "and that is obviously what they want. We have done most of the hard work, and now the loot is ready for them to take! I think not!"

"At least we wouldn't be afraid of our food supplies being poisoned," the cook pointed out. "With all this junk you men are taking out of the

tombs, and every one being able to rummage through it, I never know what may be added to our provisions."

"Your personal watch-dog, Halid, is the native I distrust most, Stan," Kit said with firm conviction.

"You can trust Halid, as much as we do the Professor," I objected.

"Besides," mused the Professor as though he was unaware of others talking in the tent, "if we sent them away, they could always return after dark, and then we would also be without the protection of the few natives who wish us well!"

I LISTENED to the professor's words with relief. The responsibility of this entire trip was on my shoulders for I was sponsored by the largest museum in America, yet I needed the moral support of Professor Mortimer for they had all worked with him before, and he knew this game so much better than I did. After all he was an old timer compared to myself.

"If we aren't to get rid of the natives now," Dr. Lowe suggested, "at least we had better guard ourselves and plan our steps more thoroughly. Everyone knows that tomorrow will be the most important day of our trip!"

"Yes," Professor Mortimer agreed, "It is the culmination of the last three years' expedition. Everything depends on it!"

We all knew what the professor was thinking, but it was Kit who gave voice to it.

"You are referring to the inscription over the door," Kit cried out.

"The tomb Stan opened that was dedicated to Osiris?" Dr. Lowe asked. "The one that had carved over the entrance 'Who enters second here, shall receive Wisdom and Death,'?"

"Yes," I said rising to my feet, "and I demand that no one go near the ex-

cavation but myself."

"Why should you just be cautious for the rest of us? What about yourself?" Kit questioned in a low voice.

"Because the rest of you are either rash, superstitious, or careless, and I believe I am none of these," I said.

Curtis Mortimer lifted his wide eyebrows over his narrow slanting black eyes with an amused twitch. He had a manner of speaking to you without uttering a sound. I knew he was ridiculing Kit and me for some experiences we had confided to him that had a touch of Highland Fancy in them. At another time Kit had accused Mortimer of having an hypnotic power over me. But I was convinced that all his mind-reading was merely the result of our constant thinking about the same subjects. The Professor had an uncanny way of taking words and thoughts out of my mouth and surprising Kit and me with them.

"But the Evil threat still remains to be broken," Dr. Lowe said, "How do you propose to expose or beat that?"

I told them then of the plan I devised while we were burying the native. "I will be the first one to enter, and I shall also be the second one to enter! The first was promised the protection of Isis, only the second, death! How can the evil spirits rightfully fulfill their threat if I am the only one to enter ever?"

"Who do you think you are fooling?" Kit jeered.

Professor Mortimer moved restlessly. I felt he was weary of what he considered child's talk.

"I'm not fooling anyone. If the spirits are out to avenge me personally, they will have to stand by their promise of protection. If it is, as you suggest, through human agency that I will be harmed, they will get me anyway no matter how many times I

do go in."

THE STRAINED and anxious expressions on the faces before me showed only too well the lurking dread that the supernatural shadows of the tombs had cast over all of us and how deeply we were affected by suggestions, where doubt became suspicion, suspicion turned to distrust, and this very distrust was being used by the spirits for us to destroy ourselves.

"I will face the responsibility alone, so none of you need be concerned about threats from anywhere. Halid will see to my safety," I decided. "And I'd suggest we all turn in and get some rest before tomorrow."

The Professor hesitated as the others took their leave, and by his one glance I knew he was questioning the advisability of my keeping Halid, and an intense anger welled up in me.

"Halid has been with me seven years, now, Professor and I have no reason to doubt him. He is my one trusted native friend. He has even been to England with me during the last two winters. He is a real scholar and good company. Just because he insists that I treat him like a servant while we are in Egypt does not mean that I have ever regarded him as an inferior to anyone in this outfit."

"But his loyalty has never been tried," Mortimer said in a quiet voice.

"Yes it has, less than six weeks ago. When other natives of our party left, Halid stuck by me. When I ordered the natives to march south to Amarna where I knew we would find richer loot, he saved me from a dagger thrust from an Egyptian. Without his aid, my small band and I would never have made it here to Thebes."

He said nothing, but shrugged and turned to go.

"Will you send Halid to me from your tent?" I asked. With a satirical

smile, he nodded and stepped into the dark.

"Were you just leading us on for the sport of it?" Kit asked irritably. "Or do you really put stock in those threats?" He smiled and added, "To me it's just a lot of bosh!"

"Murder isn't bosh, Kit. I believe we have three definite enemies we must guard against. First, the power of thought that can kill a person, but it is really his own fear that does it. Then too, outsiders. Any human being is capable of murder providing he has a motive. Also I do believe that the old Egyptians knew of ways and means of keeping us out, or barring that, to have their revenge on those who did violate their warnings. Which of these three we have to guard against now, I don't know. We have all been so carefree and careless, that any of the three agencies could readily obtain their objective of getting rid of us. That is why I can't let you rush headlong into things, hoping that sheer bravado will carry you through!"

"As for myself," I explained to Kit, "I told Karen before I left England that she needn't worry about me. I would return safely unless I should lose my nerve. If I did that, she wouldn't want me anyway."

Bringing in Karen's name seemed to steady Kit and impulsively he took a new trend.

"Why don't you give up all this, as she asked you to in her last letter? She hates this work you are doing and she can't understand why you prefer digging up mummies to being with her. It's not only hard on her. . . it's changing you. You never laugh any more, and I haven't heard you joke in over a month." Kit's face looked very young for his wise words. "Money and fame aren't everything, you know Stan. Karen feels that way too."

I THOUGHT now was the time to tell Kit what was really behind my choice of work.

"You think this business is sordid, don't you Kit?" I asked. "It isn't to me though. It is fascinating. The lure of it holds me, and the spell of it binds me. I feel that on this last trip, which may be the last for me, I will find what I have been hunting for. It is as though the dead were trying to tell us something more than their history on their age-old papyrus scrolls. I know when I reach the right tomb, I will learn what that something is. If we would give them the chance, I know that the dead can speak to us."

"You let your theories of re-embodiment influence you too much," Kit exploded. "Why it is ridiculous!"

"Perhaps it is," I conceded, "But never-the-less, I believe in it, and there is something out here that challenges me to find it!"

"You prate about us being superstitious, rash, or careless," Kit exclaimed, "but you are worse than all the rest of us put together. You get positively weird, and your ideas give me the creeps. What on earth can you hope to find among the dead? After all, they sent you here just to get relics, why can't you be satisfied with that?"

I knew by his voice then, that Kit, my brother, would never understand. I realized that I would have to continue my search alone. I reached out and grasped Kit's shoulder because I felt I could depend upon him to hold me steady in this world where the borderline between the past and present were so dim to me.

"Tomorrow, I will enter the lower level and I will go alone," I said. "The natives are too afraid to go with me, but I know I can trust you to obey me."

"Why don't you take Professor Mortimer with you?" Kit asked in

surprise.

"He would no more deprive me of the honor of being the first to enter my own findings, than I would think of entering his excavation. His is only about a thousand yards distance from mine, but we were both working on our own calculations. That is one thing scientists do not do: encroach on each other's work."

I started to muse over the situation. The tomb was some sixty feet below the level of the first dug-out. It was so far underground that I wouldn't be able to hear the call of men at work, or the sound even of shovels and picks against the earth. I would, literally, be buried alive among the dead.

While awake, this thought held no terror for me, when I stopped to reason it out, but a feeling of evil foreboding filled my sleep with nightmares. It was this that I feared the most, for I felt, even if the others did not, that there was black magic about. The dead had sent their warnings! The living now added to their threats and my heart confirmed them, but as a magnet pulls a needle, I would be drawn below alone.

Out of the night shadows, Halid came to my tent and salaamed before me. I recoiled before his glance, but before I could place it in my mind as hatred or fear, it was gone. His face now was as devoid of expression as the statues we uncovered. I was about to ask him for a nightcap when from the long sleeves of his robe he held out a mug containing the boiled and sometimes perfumed water from the Nile.

"Sahib," he murmured, "I would not take whiskey tonight! Perhaps others would take advantage of your muddled mind. I will sleep beside you tonight."

I strained to look calm, as Kit moved toward me. I could feel the pulse in my temple throbbing. Kit

was the only witness of Halid handing me the mug of water, and its contents would tell the tale. I felt perspiration breaking out on my forehead. It was Kit's safety I was concerned about, and this would tell the tale. If there was anything wrong with the mug of water as I sensed there was, Kit would know Halid had given it to me, and be able to warn the others. If I acted decisively, Kit would be spared the fact that his brother was after all, a coward.

Halid smiled and said, "Sahib is in the nerves tonight, so drink and be at peace."

My fingers were trembling but I took the mug and drank its contents.

SUDDENLY his face seemed to waver and swim before me. I tried to speak, but staggered back helplessly. I was aware of voices in the far distance. I reached toward Kit but I could no longer see him. I wanted to cry out and tell him to go home as fast as he could. . . to wait for nothing. I was consumed with deadly fear. . . fear such as I did not know existed. My hand grasped another's, and by the ring upon it. It knew it was Curtis Mortimer's. I felt his breath upon my cheek and I forced my eyes focus into his hoping our thought transfer would work this one last time. I think he answered me, 'we will see that Kit is safe.'

Then I could no longer see his eyes nor the tent beyond them. Picture after picture floated before my mind as the hateful mirages of the desert do. I tried to push away the fantastic jeering mummies that spoke in hissing whispers and mocked me. I could not banish them. They moved in on me and pushed me out. They clawed with bony fingers at my heart to push me into a golden coffin. They threw hot coals on my eyes and forced me to look into the sun. Their wailing

laughter filled my ears.

For an eternity, this continued. Wearily I knew the sun had risen, burnt and seared the earth around me. Finally it sank and then I felt life pour into my numb body and clarify my thoughts. I found I could speak. The coals were removed from my eyes and I could open them. Kit was sitting beside my cot, and Curtis Mortimer was standing in the opening of the tent. Years seemed to have been added to Kit's young face.

"What was it?" I asked weakly.

Kit jerked around and grabbed my hand. "Thank God, you're still alive!"

"Just a touch of sun, Stan." Curtis turned and felt my pulse. "But it was nip and tuck for a while."

"How long was I out?" My thick tongue barely formed the words.

"Two days," Curtis offered, "but you'll be fit in no time now."

Dr. Lowe entered the tent and his face was ashen. He saw my question and said, "Guess the sun got us both, Stan!"

"He went out when you did, but came around sooner," Kit volunteered, but his voice lacked conviction.

"Two days ago?" I cried. I knew it had not been the sun, but was perhaps the maliciousness of the natives. Then doubt filled me. It could have been the Doctor himself, and he had drugged himself so no one would suspect him. Or maybe the cook or Halid had tampered with the water. For a long moment I was silent, then I asked the question I most dreaded.

"Who has entered the tomb?" I threw my feet out of bed on to the floor and touched Kit's shoulders. He swung toward me.

"No one," he answered, but by his look, I knew he was not certain.

"Then perhaps I am to be second, after all," I said and Dr. Lowe moved to detain me.

"I'm all right," I assured the group

at large. "Call the natives, so I may question them."

Halid came at ~~my~~'s summons and a smile spread over his face. A smile of friendship and relief. He bowed low and made a gesture that all Arabs do when they are giving thanks. He touched with his left hand the seams of my cloak. Here was no fiend who wished to see me dead. . . my imagination had tricked me when I doubted him.

"The sun is powerful, Sahib, but you are stronger," he said quickly. An expression crossed his eyes of a mother who knows her child will recover from some sickness. I threw my suspicions to the winds and cursed myself for an idiot.

"Come forward," I commanded the six Arabs, and looked into their shadowy eyes. I saw nothing but concern in their faces, but when I mentioned the tomb, they shrank back.

"Have any of you entered the lower levels?" I asked, and they shook their heads violently.

"Good," I said, "Then bring me the flashlights, and I will go now."

"No!" Kit was pale. "Don't go Stan!"

"Kit's right, I think we've had enough of this," Dr. Lowe interrupted. "We's better turn back before one of us is killed."

I turned toward Curtis. Surely he wouldn't let me down. He wasn't afraid. "And you?" I asked. "Are you with me or the others?"

"You'd better wait till you're stronger," he countered. "Besides, we have more items now for the museums than we contracted for. Why not call it quits?"

"Then I'll go alone," I said, "and the rest of you can stay here and tell ghost stories!"

The Professor shrugged. "Well, good luck, and let me know when you want me to come and check the

items!"

HALIB ENTERED the tent looking worried. "The batteries are dead, Sahib," he murmured. "We shall have to wait several days before others can be sent for."

"I won't wait," I said irritably. "I'll take candles instead. We have plenty of them."

Halib bowed and went for some.

Kit walked from the tent with me, and the glare of the sun made me wince. The hot air was like a forcible enemy striking me in the face. He handed me my helmet saying, "Keep it on, Stan, or the sun will get you again!"

We crossed the short stretch to the excavation and Kit was unnaturally silent.

"You won't stay long, this first trip down?" he said. "I'll wait for you here."

"I didn't like the idea of his hanging around in the sun, so I said, 'Be a good kid, and go talk to the Professor until I get back!'"

He nodded and without further words, I turned my back on him and began the descent down the crude steps to the first level. Kit had lighted a candle for me and stuck the others in my pocket, putting with them a large supply of matches.

Small lizards, sunning themselves, scampered with fright into darker crannies as I walked by. The flickering light cast weird shadows below and I looked back to be sure Kit was not waiting. He was gone, so I turned a corner and made my way forward. All around me there were columns with ancient legends carved into them. Some columns represented palm trees and others had exotic lotus blossoms with petals turned toward the sky. I went through one passageway filled with our packing boxes and turned to the left. Beneath my feet,

brilliant tiles shone with priceless inlays. We had already uncovered a royal dias which was trimmed with gold, and it stood in the shadows, empty and strangely bizarre, awaiting a royal owner and defying the commoner. A bedstead of sumptuous craftsmanship was exposed a little further on, and I had found blood stains upon it, a mute testimony of foul play in centuries past.

The quiet seeped through my brain and spoke more vividly for souls gone by than all the historians of time ever could. As I passed each object, I felt the present receding into nothingness.

A small vicious wind whipped my legs, and blew my candle out. In those few moments I could hear the voices of a thousand dead, and terror filled me. I am not naturally a coward, but a strange and awful singing filled this dark tomb, and then died away.

With the relighting of my candle pushing the shadows away from me, I saw a stringed instrument swaying from the walls. The wind that had blown my candle out had been caught up in those old reeds and had greeted me or warned me, I didn't know which. Still, I must go on, despite my growing uneasiness, and wiping the cold sweat from my forehead, I prepared to enter the lower level.

THE AIR WAS strangely dead and sickening. My feet were unsteady, as I lowered myself through the small opening, and a few pebbles rolled down and rattled upon that age-old coffin. I glanced around me in the crypt. On every inch of wall space were warnings and threats to whoever should dare to open the coffin of this daughter of Isis.

I knew then that the treasures which were inside must be priceless, and that the scroll of papyrus would have a strange and valuable tale to

tell.

I melted some wax upon a rock and set the candle firmly in it. The gold mask of the embalmed person within displayed exquisite beauty, and I was puzzled at the strange resemblance to some one I had seen in this world. I could not place the likeness, and dared not pause to think.

Slowly and with reverent fingers I broke the seals around this gold encased sarcophagus and gently lifted the lid. The silver hinges on which it swung were matchless in their workmanship. Beneath, was the lined, swaddled figure of a girl. I felt an overwhelming desire to see the face uncovered, thinking I might better recall whom she looked like. Cautiously, I began the tedious task of unwinding the age yellowed bandages. Time had made these bindings so fragile that spider webs had more resilience.

As I was about to remove the final layer, I heard a brittle scratching coming from behind my hands. My heart pounded, and I drew my fingers away sharply. I saw that my cuff had caught the end of a rolled papyrus script and it stilled my hands as though the immortal spirit of the dead was beseeching me to read, before I looked upon the face beneath my cold fingers.

I picked up the scroll, saw the royal seal of the Pharaohs, and as I tried to lift it intact, it crumbled and fell to bits beneath my touch. As my eyes focused upon the first words in Egyptian script, my heart beat with excitement, and I lost track of space and time. I translated as I read, and these words held me:

"I, Kara, am a daughter of Isis, and Osiris will avenge me! No man who harms me or mine, shall go free. Be warned, for in coming years, through new eras, my spirit will again roam this world, and Isis will avenge me.

Through Stalan, my lover will I be avenged. You shall pay for my blood, O Leto, and for the blood of Stalan, whose life you have taken. No longer will you be able to prey upon the innocent, oh thou lewd Leto. You may, throughout the ages, kill Stalan many times in the vain hope of escaping your punishment, but through eternity, my spirit will call out to Stalan to come to this my resting place and read these words of your damned deeds. The Gods will find you out, Leto, and a dagger shall rend your cursed heart. Stalan will know you now by your murderous eyes, by your hard mouth, by your greed, but most surely by your mark. The mark of a murderer is left with these words, and he shall know you, and himself and me by them. For these marks are made with his blood, and with the fingers of the killer. Stalan shall come to my tomb, and he shall know he is the re-embodiment of Stalan, by this sign. The lights shall flicker and go out! The Gods themselves shall give him this sign, for I am a daughter of Isis."

Even as I read these words, my eyes lifted from the paper and glanced toward my candle. To my horror, the blaze was growing dimmer and fainter, and as I cried out, blackness surrounded me. There had been no wind, no breeze and no human hand had killed the flame. I felt myself grow cold in the clutches of this black magic. It was true then, that this curse of Egypt could kill. I looked up, and in the far corner a figure seemed to glow and become a living lighted form. Words blazed out in the darkness and I read in Egyptian, "The Avenger." Frantically I stifled the screams that rose to my throat and choked me. I fumbled for my box of matches. With trembling fingers, I again relighted the candle and felt for the others. This time I would have two candles to

give me light. I looked with dilated eyes toward the figure that had illuminated itself in the darkness and saw only a statue of an Egyptian God. Its gold covering must have reflected the light from the opening in the entrance-way, but that did not explain by what magic my candle had gone out!

I TRIED desperately to calm myself with cold reason, but it was some few moments before I could control my contracted breathing, and then the reaction made me laugh harshly. I knew I would not repeat that laugh aloud again, for the sound echoed through the passageway and was flung into the tomb about me like the sound of a ghoul. There was a second's silence, then the instrument which had caught the wind before, gave out a weird moaning.

I tried to relax and finish reading the words on the papyrus roll. Then my eyes were staring at the description of Stalan and the marks at the bottom of the scroll which the daughter of Isis, Kara, had called the 'marks of the murderer.' *They were fingerprints!* Here was proof! Proof, which even in this day and age could not be scoffed at; because with age-old blood, Kara had placed Leto's fingerprints there. There were three prints in all; One under the name Kara, one under the name Stalan, and one under the name Leto!

My body began to tremble and I doubted my sanity, because while I had been reading Kara's words, a profound conviction had filled me that Stalan was myself. Her description of me was photostatic. Well, I need have no fear of the dead! I could prove or disprove their words. I could act. My fingerprint was all that was needed! Then I could compare Stalan's with Stanley's, my own.

I jerked a third candle from my

pocket, lighted the wick, and breathlessly watched a small mound of wax drip from the tilted flame. Then I discarded the candle and quickly pressed my finger into the hot mold. With a magnifying glass I looked at the new wax impression, comparing it with the bloody print on the papyrus.

I felt a chill start at my toes and finally bristle the hair at the name of my neck. **THE PRINTS WERE IDENTICAL!** Mine were Stalan's and Stalan's were Stanley's. Here was the proof of an age old question. **FINGERPRINTS DON'T LIE.**

Here was the proof the world was waiting for. In all the whole world no fingerprints of any two people are ever alike. But no one had thought to compare prints of the dead which would be found in the tombs with any of those living today.

Here was inexorable testimony that personalities lived age after age, were reborn to suffer and to learn. I had found what the dead had wanted me to find. I had uncovered the wisdom that was Egypt. I had found out their secret and the reason of their careful preservation of their bodies. Egypt had spoken.

And before my eyes I had the fingerprints of my murderer. For if mine corresponded with those of Stalan, his must correspond with Leto's.

FEAR GRIPPED me anew. I had been murdered many times according to the papyrus, and even now this fiend might be planning my death, that he might have Kara, or was it now Karen? God, was it Karen? How could I prove that Karen and Kara were one and the same? Surely, she had left some description of herself and there were her fingerprints too. I could compare these blood stains with the as yet unseen ones on Karen's last letter to me. My

glance fell upon the mask of Kara, and then I knew whom it resembled. I groped for the papyrus and continued to read;

"Keep faith, oh, Stalan. You may not yet conquer this generation, this embodiment, but some day, some time, you will! Wherever you are, there will I be also. Whomsoever you shall love, that woman I shall be. Leto must repeat himself with each slaughter. There will be the death of two lowly ones, before he can reach you, for there must be two souls to escort you into the spirit presence of the daughter of Isis. Farewell oh lover, and know that the Gods have given you their signs: Two deaths, and three lights shall die before your allotted time draws near. Farewell! And remember the love of the daughter of Isis. Kara."

I threw the script from me and watched the candles, fascinated. Would the Gods give me the sign? Would the candles go out? No. Not again! It must have been natural causes which had extinguished it before. I felt I could not stand this silence, the smell of embalming fluids and dried lotus leaves. I looked at the partially unwrapped face of Kara and a sob broke from me.

Thank God I had not looked upon the dead and shriveled face of Karen, for now I was convinced it was her old body. The outward expression of the one I had loved, centuries past. I mourned her death now, as I had been unable to do in the past. Tears fell unheeded over my cheeks, falling on the strips about her face and losing themselves in the fold. Again in this life I would have to know that terrible separation.

And then through my grief, came the realization of what I must do. I must find the fingerprints to correspond with Leto's, and drive the dagger deep into his heart before he

again separated Karen and me. I would use the dagger which lay beside Kara in her coffin, and which still was covered with the stains of my past blood.

My mind which had been on the borderline of defeat through fear, gradually cleared and a strength of determination born of failure from past generations flowed through me. As I made this decision, the two candles, flickered, wavered, and went out!

I grabbed the dagger and swung around. I must get out of this place. I must avenge Kara and save myself.

And then I held my breath, for I felt a presence in the tomb with me. Not the love presence of Kara, but an indefinable quality of threat, a suffocating miasma of murder. From the four walls a sickening odor filled the air and it gagged me. I dared not move or start for the opening, for I knew he was there.

EVERY FIBRE of my being warned me, and I strained my muscles to keep my will from dashing wildly out, shrieking, into his arms and onto his deadly weapon.

My fingers clutched the dagger so fiercely that the ancient hieroglyphics were pressed into my skin. And then the gold covered statue of the 'Avenger' cast a light onto him, and his eyes gleamed out with hate and greed as he leaped upon me.

I slashed wildly at him and pounded where his grinning face should be. I heard my frenzied cries echo and re-echo through the walls and passageways and his laugh, cruel and hard, pierced my ears.

I could no longer make out his figure in the darkness, for he had moved back of me, and now I was silhouetted against the dull gray. I tried to force my paralyzed legs to dash up the causeway, but before I could move

the dagger was wrenched from my grasp and I felt his fingers at my throat.

I kicked and clawed and finally brought my knees up and catapulted him against the wall. Something struck me, against my forehead, at the same instant piercing the skin to the bone and I sank to the floor. I vaguely knew that the ground should be solid but I felt more as if I was floating through endless seas of light.

I thought so this is death! Leto has won again, and I must return with a new body and experience this horror all over again. But first, I must rest... I must float on and on.

Far away, I could hear Karen's voice beating against my brain, pleading with me, but I could not make out the words. I was too tired, and gave up trying.

When I was again conscious of my aching body, and that I could open my eyes, I saw Kit standing over me. He spoke and I knew I was not dead. I was still alive, but my weariness made me lie without motion!

The words over the tomb filled my mind. 'Who enters second here, shall receive Wisdom and Death.'

Before I had feared death and now I would welcome it, if it would blot out what wisdom I had gained. All else receded before that awful fact that again and yet again I must return to a body to outwit a murderer. The threats of the dead were pitifully small compared to this hell. The inexorable power of fate and the pre-ordained held me in their clutches. One simple death and then forever to be in oblivion was now more to be wished, but I knew it could not be. Why, why, must I dedicate my life to the foiling of the wicked? What terrible deed had I previously committed that this role of hunted was given me for life expression? I would not stand for it! I must now, this

time, break this binding spell. I would do it! By the power of Isis, Goddess of the Moon, I would...

"Take it easy," Kit was saying. "You must have fainted. It is so close in here no one could breathe. You are not strong enough yet to come down here alone."

I looked at Kit and thought, should I tell him? Or would that draw him into this evil net also? Should I fight it out alone, or ask his help? Did he suspect? Had Kit passed my would-be murderer in the hallway?

A hundred questions ran through my mind, but his eyes told me nothing. However, when he spoke again, relief flowed through me.

"You're safe now, Stan. A native entered after you and died in the entrance way. He was second, you see!"

This brought me out of my apathy and I jumped up.

I will be next!" I cried. I glanced around the crypt and saw the dagger flung against the feet of the statue of the 'Avenger', and hastily I picked it up and stuck it into my belt. I reached down and lifted the papyrus scroll. Kit was waiting for me with a quizzical expression on his face. He was looking me over carefully.

"What's the matter, Stan? Had a fist fight with the mummy?"

I saw then that there was blood on me, and I knew it was indeed a live man with whom I had fought, and not a tortured imagination.

"I think I can tell you who it was, if we look this body of the dead Egyptian over. He should have some cuts on him. This affair is not as simple as you think, Kit. We must hurry."

KIT LEAD the way through the maze of passageways, our candles casting strange and grotesque shadows around us. Kit cast furtive glances back at me every few paces.

We gave wide berth to all the columns and statues which might conceal the lurking body of a killer.

I think Kit realized now that he had saved me from something more pernicious than the threats of the dead! The air became fresher and with an uncontrollable joy I laughed freely as I saw the blue sky overhead again.

The body of the Egyptian lay where Kit had stepped over it, when he had at least heard my frenzied cries. We turned the body over but after careful examination, we could find no marks or scratches upon him. Peacefully, his eyes stared into the heavens, and we knew the Doctor would say, he too, had died of heart failure.

I bent closer as my nostrils caught the same sweet odor that had flooded the lower level and my eyes saw the rich dirt encrusted beneath his nails. Here was not the man with whom I had fought for my life, but he had surely been within the rooms where Kara lay, for the dirt under his nails was of gold. Unconsciously my hands massaged my neck where ruthless fingers had left their mark. Kit saw this too, and I knew I must tell him the whole story.

As we turned toward our tent, Halid came running out, and terror dilated his eyes. He grabbed my hands and went to his knees murmuring over and over, "Sahib, how is it you are alive? He did not kill you? Oh, thou favored of Isis and Osiris, save me then!"

I jerked him to his feet. "Who did you think killed me?" He looked upward. "Speak, Halid, for the love of God! Tell me."

He turned senseless eyes back to mine, as I held him by his tunic, and then fell in a huddled heap at my feet. Natives came running, and then stood staring at me.

Kit groaned. "Oh, God, now the natives think you killed him. They'll think you killed all three of them."

The Arabs and Egyptians started muttering around the opening, but did not advance toward me. I knew I must act quickly, before they did. I spread the papyrus roll out for them to see and commanded them to read, but when they saw the name of the daughter of Isis, they fell to the ground covering their faces. Then I knew they would not harm me, but neither could I ever expect any help from them.

Kit and I carried Halid into the tent. We told the natives to bring Dr. Lowe and Curtis Mortimer, who were working in the excavation some five hundred feet away.

I felt faint from lack of food, and speculated how long it had taken me to decipher Kara's words in the tomb, and how long I had lain there until Kit had come. It would be better to eat nothing now, rather than run the chances of being poisoned.

I went about the work I had to do before the sun set; the work of finding the fingerprints of Karen and comparing them to Kara's. Kit watched me go through her letters, and a peculiar light filled his eyes, as though at last he recognized my intent.

HALID LAY moaning, but his breathing became more natural and I launched into the telling of how my candles had gone out. Kit was bending over Halid and seemed to disregard my words.

"Halid has probably been drugged the same as I was Kit," I said. "All the doctors in the world couldn't convince me now that I had sunstroke. Someone is drugging our water, and it isn't safe here any longer for any of us, so I think we had better start for Armana before it is too late."

"You're wrong, Stan! No one is drugging us. I've read before that the Egyptians put poisonous gases into the tombs. That is what overcame you the other day. It takes several hours before the effect is noticed, after you have contacted fresh air again. You have always been the first to enter these newly opened tombs, so you naturally got the full effect of them. That's what killed the two natives, also. They were probably in the tombs thieving when we didn't know about it."

I looked at him in amazement, for now I saw that my younger brother knew more than I had given him credit for.

"But who dragged the natives out of the tombs?" I asked. "If they are as afraid as they appear, who induced them to enter?"

"I don't know," Kit said wearily, "but I heard Halid tell them that you had gone below with candles. They were very angry with him when they heard this. They said the heat from the candles would make the poisonous gases work faster. They accused Halid of letting you go to your death unwarned, and called him the murderer. One of the natives went after you, and for his loyalty he died."

All the time Kit was talking, I was making fingerprints and tests, until finally I was convinced that I had a perfect one of Karen's. When I had compared them with Kara's, they too were identical...but I had expected this! Then I took one of Halid's thumb, but the whorls did not compare with Leto's.

How was I to get the rest of the natives now to submit to touching something for print? Some idol they worshiped would bring them to me. But that meant I must again enter the tombs! The lower hall was filled with hundreds of idols of Osiris, made of almost pure gold. A perfect

surface for prints.

I walked over and stood beside Halid. The words which poured from his drugged lips were not intelligible, and I knew he was having the same fitful dreams that I had experienced. A fear for Kit passed over me and I cursed the fact that I had brought him. His innocence might be a protection from the natives, but his faith was no armor against a dagger. I believe that a faint suspicion entered my mind then who the murderer was, but I did not hold tightly to it, and it passed.

"You had better carry arms," I commanded him, giving him a revolver. "And don't sit with your back to the door...stay at least three feet away from the sides of the tent!"

"Where are you going?" Kit cried. "Not into the tombs again?" The fear in his voice was transmitted to me.

"Yes, Kit, but nothing will happen to me this time. But you must not come. Stay with Halid."

"He doesn't need me, and you do," he protested. "Fear takes the fight out of the best fighter."

"Halid can't protect himself when he is unconscious," I said grimly. "They will make a try for him too, because I believe he knows too much about the workings of this particular curse."

I TURNED and left him, and the hot sands scorched my feet even through my heavy boots. The natives had carried the Egyptian body away now, for he was low-caste, and now they stood looking fearfully down into the tomb when I walked up. They separated and let me pass. I swung around and held their eyes with my gray ones.

"See that no one enters. The curse of Osiris will slay whoever comes down," I said, and the tone of my voice might have been that of an an-

cient priest. They cowed before my look, then one smiled as he saw me take my revolver from my holster.

"Osiris fears no gun," he said. "May the daughter of Isis protect you Sahib, for you have been kind to us."

This time I had brought more than a dozen candles with me, and every few paces, I lighted one and set it in place. My way would be lighted both going and coming. With natives guarding the entrance, NO ONE could get through the lower lever.

But even with these lights to guide me, the going was not fast, for there were great mounds of loose earth piled throughout the hallways. A wind was rising and lisped about me like evil tongues. The instrument kept up an incessant wailing that sounded like a dirge. As I passed it, I swore I would be calm; carefully I took it from its peg where it was swinging, and silenced it forever. I raised my arm to lean it against the wall and terror muffled my heart, for the sound as my arm struck the golden strings came repeatedly and sorrowfully, "Stalan... Stalan... Stalan..."

My fingers were unwilling to obey the commands from my mind, and my palms were moist against dagger and revolver as I moved forward again.

At last, with but three candles left, I lowered myself into the excavation farthest from the sun. There were many golden objects for me to choose from but I deliberately selected the jewel box on a dais and saw beside it a sumptuous perfume casket. A faint mist was rising from its corners like steam, and I knew Kit had been right. Here was the diablerie which had caused me to faint when I had almost overcome my murderer. I turned to look once more upon the likeness of Karen, and paused to re-cover her face. As I leaned over the gold mask, it seemed that the lips parted as

though to speak. My breath filmed on the gold and as I raised up a shot rang out from the recesses behind me, and some object flew past my head.

"Good God! Had Kit tried to enter after all my warnings? I had set a trap, and he, young fool had run right into it."

With greater horror than I could feel for my own safety, I vaulted Kara's coffin and made my way with pounding heart upward. My eyes saw no candles burning, and I saw I would have to work in the dark.

As I crawled to my knees through the hole, two hands slithered down my leg. Why hadn't I brought the deadly perfume casket to throw into his face?

I held my breath and listened. Someone was trying to move behind me again, and then I knew from where that creature of murder had come. My fingers felt a coffin and the lid was off! It had been closed when I entered. Should I crawl inside and wait for that thing, my murderer to pass by? Or would I be more easily trapped there, murdered and left there for centuries to come? I couldn't chance his passing and not looking, so inch by inch I moved toward the opening. One false move, and he would know where I was. The silence around us was the silence of death.

Then, suddenly, the blood in my veins coursed wildly, for I felt a warm breath against my cheek. He had moved right up against me and now there was no retreat. I heard a grating crash, as the coffin lid my hand rested on fell from my shaking fingers and he was upon me.

WITH dagger in left hand and revolver in my right, I let him have it. The flare of the shot revealed those same fanatical lips, and cold hard eyes beneath a partial mask. A

sharp pain rent my shoulder, and my right arm became useless. With desperate effort, I brought the butt of the gun up and slashed out toward that leering head. The impact against his skull was sickening, but the deathlike grip was again around my throat.

I knew no help would come from Kit, who was probably dead. With my left hand, even as my neck was being bent back and back so that any further pressure would snap it like a stick, I forced my left arm between me and my assailant. My only hope lay in one swift slash of steel across his neck. Further and further he bent me back. My breathing was choked off and my ears were ringing in agony. I kicked madly with one foot and then with all the force of my slipping strength, I drove the dagger again and again toward that stinking body. God, couldn't this thing be killed? His fingers began to slacken, and then I lunged, and loosed one hand. But he was not through yet, for while his hands no longer choked me, he tripped me and we fell in a heap onto the floor.

My right arm hung inertly, and I was conscious of lying on it. I could not move it, but it might act as a lever. With his knee on my chest he tried with his two free hands to get the dagger, but I turned, writhing and slashing. Then I felt that there was no ground under one leg. We had worked our way back to the opening of the lower level. If I could catapult him from left to right, he would fall through the opening. I relaxed, and he must have thought I was dead, for he stopped his flailing and with hissing breath grabbed my dagger. In that one second, gathering all my remaining forces, I heaved him violently to one side. There was a scream of fright, the falling of loose dirt, and then the dull thud of his body strik-

ing the tiled floors. There followed the rending sound of metal being torn away from rock, the grating of a tremendous weight falling, and the crunching of bones being crushed through flesh! Then there was silence and the stench of blood.

Whimpering like a hurt animal, and sobs convulsing my breathing, I began crawling away, dragging my dead arm beside me. Somewhere in this inferno I would find Kit's body. After some minutes I bumped into a stilled figure. My fingers ran over the clothes and they were sticky with blood. They were Kit's clothes. My numb fingers felt for the face and came in contact with the matted beard of Halid! Halid here! I had left him unconscious in the tent... Kit's clothes on Halid... I must be mad. None of this nightmare could be true. If these were Kit's clothes, I could not leave them within the tombs. And faithful Halid was inside them.

SLOWLY, I straightened out the figure, and began to drag it by the collar after me. A groan passed his lips and I knew then he was not yet dead. Could I make this arduous ascent with my burden before I lost consciousness? The drugs from the tombs were beginning to work. Would I be wasting my breath to call for help? Would the natives dare come even if they heard me?

On and on I dragged my burden. Once I stumbled into a three-foot hole, and could hardly drag myself out. The terror of imagining it to be a grave drove me over the edge and up the passageway. At last my fingers touched a candle which had been knocked down and I lit it, to be sure it was Halid and not my murderer I was dragging.

As his body rested across my knees, he opened his blood-shot eyes, and a

faint smile lighted his features. Consciousness had slowly returned.

"Forgive me, Sahib," he murmured through bloody lips. "I had to do the knocking out of Kit. He had moved to follow you, and Kit would have to be killed."

"But you were unconscious," I cried. "How could you, and why should you?"

"No, that was the fake, Sahib. You had no trust in me, and I had to be knowing what was to happen to my masters. How else could I be to protect you. But the young Kit will be of health now, and will come to us. Rest. Do not use your strength further. Isis has protection of you!

Make call for Kit, and the natives will let him pass now!"

My call and his answer robbed me of my last strength, and I sank weakly down upon the cold, chill tiles. Kit dashed down the passageway, lighting candles as he came, and when he saw us, he rushed forward.

"You are wise, young Kit," Halid said. "So much more of wisdom than I, for I should to know and understand from the first."

"Shall I get you out of here?" Kit asked anxiously. "Will the natives come if I call?"

"In a little while," Halib said. "It is better first to be dissolving the hell from Sahib Stanley's mind. It is the more fitting that the horrors of the tombs be buried here. Hand me your papyrus, Kit, the one that Stanley does cherish."

I jerked up, stretching out my knife-slashed arm. "They are Kara's words, and so they are mine, Halib, and for my eyes only," I said.

Halib shook his head. "You want only of what is true, Stanley, and this is not all of truth."

"But the fingerprints on it Halid, they don't lie! They are the proof of my re-embodiment," I cried.

"No re-embodiment, Sahib. Only, embodiment. There are only one set of prints."

"But Stalan's are the same as mine!"

"No, Stanley," Halib interrupted gently. "That is true only in the mind of fancies and murder of the one who wished to be harming you. It is an evil and cunning plan that was laid. You see, we have only your own real prints there, and none of Stalan's."

"But how could mine get there? I don't believe you!"

"You are superstitious, he played upon that. You wanted to believe. You also think that fear can kill. Just that way, he hoped to kill you; by suggestion to rob you of strength. Failing that, he hoped the natives might be turned against you, but he forgot he couldn't turn them against 'one who believed in their Gods'. He hoped to kill you through power of mind and poison. He waited until a papyrus turned up that would fall in with his designs. Several before almost served his purpose, but not quite. This scroll said your MURDERER had always won and probably would again in this incarnation. But Kit spoiled his plans. Kit saw him stealing one of your letters and watched him take Karen's fingerprints from them."

KIT REACHED into his inner pocket and brought out three small etchings into rubber. He turned them over and saw whorls which I recognized as Karen's and an enlarged photograph of them. The negative was of mine.

"With those stamps of rubber, he stamped your prints onto the old papyrus scroll."

"But the candles went out, just as Kara said they would! Is that not enough without the prints?"

Halib smiled. "Yes, I wondered

how he would get around to that, but Kit figured that out also. He, the murderer had to carry out that message to the letter to make you believe enough to fear."

"But who would want to kill me? Who would go to all this trouble, and why?"

"The death of an archaeologist in a strange country is easier to explain to authorities than you would believe. They would not examine too closely, because they too would fear the threats. Natives are not unlike the rest of the world, for most people fear threats from the dead, and especially the warnings of the mysterious Egyptians. If you had been found dead, this papyrus would have been believed by most people, and there would have been no way to gather up the natives who were working on this excavation."

"And how would my death have been explained to those who were my own?" I exclaimed.

"By your own words," Halib said. "You believed fear could kill you, and he would have testified that you were afraid of the warnings over the tombs and died of shock. He overlooked no detail. He was clever."

He was indeed clever, for it was only a miracle that I had not lost my true reason in the tombs and let him kill me.

"But why?" I asked again.

"I think he started out clean, good and true, but seeing all this untold treasure of gold and priceless gems turned him into an avaricious fiend. Beneath the coffin of Kara lies the treasury of Egypt! He knew you were honest Stanley, and would insist that everything, yes everything, bars of gold and all, be turned over to your government. He knew that you would itemize every object found and give the relics back to the Egyptians so they themselves could

sell them to world museums. His greed could not allow that. With you dead, however, there was no one else in this party who knew how much was there. Enough gold here, if it were melted up and smuggled out of Egypt, to buy the wealthiest nation in the world."

I looked up still unconvinced, for it was hard for me to give up my proof of re-incarnation in Halib's few moments of talking.

"Tell me how the candles were made to go out at his will, and I can believe you then Halid."

"Kit can better explain of that," Halid demurred.

"An ingenious but simple method, Stan," Kit explained, and took an unlighted candle and held it up to another flame. Most of it appeared waxen and pale yellow but at intervals of every two inches it seemed to have a greenish cast. Kit found one of these spots and broke the candle in two. As he did so a thimble full of liquid spilled out and dripped over the edges.

"Your-would-be-murderer tampered with our candles, and inserted into small cavities enough fire-extinguisher in liquid form to put out the blaze. By the time you got around to re-lighting them, the surplus liquid had evaporated, so you didn't notice it. The wax covering around it, of course kept it intact until the candle had burned down to the next deposit of liquid. As soon as I learned this I knew who he was, and understood why the batteries for the flashlights had been destroyed."

I LOOKED at Halid and Kit with dazed eyes. Now I could see it all, but I had been so willing to believe the prophecies of the dead, that it had not been a difficult matter to fool me. Fire-extinguisher? Then it must have been one of us and not an

Egyptian who had planned this diabolical murder. And he was still in the lower level. Perhaps he was not really dead! I must see for myself.

"He is in there," I said pointing behind me. "I must see who it is. Will you come with me?"

Halib and Kit arose and helped me to my feet. They followed me as I retraced my steps over ground which was spattered with my own blood.

I lifted my candle high over my head and looked down into the lower level. There, still lying peacefully, was Kara, the gold-masked likeness of her face still in place, but over in the corner was the mutilated, marred body of Professor Mortimer. His clothing was hanging from him in strips. I saw then why my dagger had not killed him with my first forceful thrust before the poisons had begun to work; for under his clothing he had worn a linked coat of mail. He must have uncovered the coat of mail in his excavation, for there had been none in mine. Now I understood why it had been necessary for him to drug me two days ago. He knew I had uncovered the real and valuable tombs, but he had drugged me so that he would have a few days in which to explore in my excavation, underground from his to mine. In this way, unseen, he could also remove treasures to his own. He had found Kara and her message before I had, and had tampered with it for his own use.

He lay motionless and I knew he must be dead. I saw that in his hand, across his chest was the hilt of the dagger. And it had been driven through his heart by the terrific weight of the falling statue of the Avenger! The Professor's secretive digging had loosened the statue from its base, and when I had catapulted him against it, it had fallen over onto him.

The Avenger! How prophetic!

Every word which Kara had written on that ancient papyrus scroll had come true. The god's had given their signs, and I believe them. After all, the script did not say *how* the light would go out, or by what method the lowly ones would be killed. And most surely the marks beneath her words were in fact, the

marks of a murderer. The resemblance to Karen of the mask of Kara, and the description of myself is not coincidence!

The rest of the world may accept Kit's explanation of this tale of Egypt but I am convinced I have learned her secret. I shall return to Karen, believing, and I know she will be convinced, even as I am.

COME SEVEN— COME ELEVEN



By WILLIS WRIGHT



THERE IS a weighty tome in existence called "The Theory Of Games And Economic Behavior" written by a famous mathematician and economist. It is a difficult book, impossible for a layman to read with any satisfaction. It is full of specialized mathematical symbology and in general it is hard plodding through it. But it is representative of a new system of thinking, which is not only of extreme importance in the scientific world, but which is considered quite "hush-hush" by the government. Here is what it is about.

For a long long time men have tried to apply economic principles and mathematical formulas to business—without a shred of success. Then the two scientists who wrote the above mentioned book came up with some very clever ideas. "What?" they asked themselves, "can most nearly be compared with a business operation? What human experience has the same idea of give and take, of chance and luck, of skill and foresight, of intelligence and stupidity, of strategy and blind hope?"

Well there is a common series of human experience which answers the question and yet which one ordinarily wouldn't connect with business or science—namely, *games*! Games, like chess, like poker, like most gambling—all have one thing in common—they are blends of skill and luck. They involve many circumstance beyond a man's control yet a man has a certain amount of control over sensible or non-sensible actions in games.

So the scientists studied games, developing special symbology and digging deep

into logical analysis for a way of representing the nature of the game. As they did so, they discover that the games in many ways, when resolved into their elements, seemed exceedingly like human experiences in business and in *military* strategy, wherein both subjects wits and skill along with chance are pitted against similar wit and skill and the omnipotent chance.

Of course the government and the military immediately saw the usefulness of the technique and so a good deal of it is under strict military wrappings. Stop and think about the terrific ideas behind the almighty technique!

Two men playing in a game of poker are surprisingly similar to two generals opposing each other on a battlefield. While it is true that the stakes are entirely different as well as the procedures, there are still some things in common. And when the two problems are boiled down, the elements of strategy are almost identical including the bluffing practices used by both groups of contestants!

So scientists, having resolved these basic components are able to study a complicated process involving maybe tens of thousands or millions of variable, with some degree of sense. For this reason the automatic calculating machines are going to find tremendous use—possibly they are so being used right now. Living and working, if this thing goes on, will be reduced to a strategic problem capable of being solved by the application of formulae! O tempora, O mores! Will we become machines—the good Lord forbid!

THE ANCIENT GEOMETRICAL MONUMENT

(ARTICLE 5)

by **ROCKY STONE**

(Note: This is the fifth of a series of TAG-M Articles which bring to the public an understanding of amazing discoveries which are of priceless practical value today; which were also keyed in the Ancient Geometrical Monument, whose displacement cornerstone has been called for centuries the Great Pyramid, the ancient time-capsule, and whose keyed correct knowledge or wisdom gives an exact scientific standard for genuine science that is capable of unlimited expansion.)

THE fundamental principle or basis for the genuine science of man which was keyed in the Great Pyramid from the plans of the M-giants, those apparently realistic wise men of long ago, brings great changes to man's point of view regarding government, jurisprudence, psychiatry, psychology, as well as everything in mankind's experience—and the physical sciences, except for their relation to the physical body of man, are subordinated to the disclosure of this realistic fundamental principle of man which is of the utmost importance to those who may be able to perceive its priceless value in relation to the present unsolved problems concerning man.

Alexander Pope was apparently right in stating that the proper study of man, is man, but the study and the correct knowledge of man has been held back not only because of the lack of knowledge concerning the fundamental principle of man, but also because of the beliefs, customs, and the organization of human society up to date. As perhaps most of you have realized, there is a great change coming in the fundamental basis of human society—and the correct knowledge or wisdom of the M-gi-

ants, keyed in their ancient geometrical time-capsule, is of priceless practical value in the coming renaissance of man in human society's mental evolution to a higher and saner civilization and culture.

The lack of knowledge concerning man has made world people the prey to many kinds of rackets—rackets which grow and flourish simply because people have not as yet altogether attained a high enough position in the **FREEDOM FROM IGNORANCE** scale. Whenever actual and genuine scientific facts are discovered, the masses of people should be educated and informed, since Freedom from Ignorance is definitely the correct general definition of and for *liberty*, and informed world people are the sure reliance for the liberty of human society.

In Article 4, it has already been pointed out that the fundamental principle in the genuine science of man—which will be understood to be genuinely scientific by all who desire to understand and employ it—has not only ratified and confirmed the principles of the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution (which is the U.S. Government that is made up of principles, *not men*), but allows the first

employment of the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States (Figure S.) for the defense of the U.S. Government. It was also pointed out that the Administration of the U.S. Government, composed of all personnel in the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judicial Branches, requires a highly developed standard of ethics in order to properly, correctly, and lawfully administer the principles of the U.S. Government for the benefit of American citizens.

Henry Clay, an American statesman, who seldom—if ever—lost a case as a lawyer, pointed out many years ago that *"Government is a trust, and its officers are trustees, and both the trust and the trustees are for the benefit of the people."* It appears that the U.S. Government, which is made up of scientific principles which are the result of centuries in man's experience in life, is a *trust*, while the Administration of the U.S. Government is composed of the trustees of *this great trust*—and it is the responsibility of all American citizens to see to it that only those persons are allowed to be in the Administration's Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches who can be definitely trusted with the great responsibility of administering the U.S. Government properly, correctly, and lawfully for the benefit of not only all American citizens, but also for the benefit of each and every U.S. citizen.

Breasted, an outstanding Egyptologist, has written about many enlightening facts concerning the culture of persons who lived during the time of the Pharaohs. In pointing out the dawn of conscience of the human race, Breasted showed a great achievement in his study of certain members of a past civilization. It may be instructive to analyze the word *conscience*, and it is found that *con*



FIGURE S

Reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States, whose pyramid in relation to TAG-M and the Great Pyramid does ratify and confirm the Declaration of Independence and the principles of the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution.

means with while science is correct knowledge which can be verified by observation or application, or both.

Jurists or informed persons have known for many years that since there has not been an exact scientific basis for normal human action, behavior, and conduct (the ABCs of man), this has forced jurisprudence (the science of law) to remain outside the rating of a genuine science. In fact, the real founders of the U.S. Government actually were cognizant of this discrepancy and feared that the members of the Judicial Branch might not always be on guard against any tyranny (wrong) that might become rampant—as was pointed out by Thomas Jefferson. It is actually a fact that the Pharaohs—at least the Pharaohs of the third, fourth, and a few other dynasties—had and employed a much higher standard for justice (right) than is actually practiced among world people at the time of our generation.

Psychiatry is supposed to be the science whereby the cure of abnormal human action, behavior, and conduct

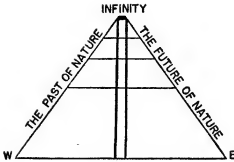


FIGURE T

The South side of the Great Pyramid, symbolizing the present subjective instant of man, which is within man. Also known as "Jacob's Ladder."

can be accomplished, and the coming disclosure of the fundamental principle of man, which is keyed in the M-giants' time-capsule, will allow psychiatrists—as well as judges in courts of law—to have a genuine standard which gives even more than the definition of the so-called "line" which separates sanity and insanity, thus allowing what is abnormal in human action, behavior, and conduct to be not only understood, but also prevented and cured. The M-giants' fundamental principle of man, as epitomized in their ancient time-capsule, the Great Pyramid, will allow the same scientific standard to be used by government officials, jurists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and the "man in the street", since the fundamental principle of man shows man how to think, how to concentrate, as well as the exact scientific standard for normal human action, behavior, and conduct—a boon for human society.

As will be presented in future TAG-M Articles, the M-giants keyed in their time-capsule an exact scientific basis for psychology which allows it to become a genuine science which has an exact scientific standard for normal human action, behavior, and conduct. (It is interesting to observe

that the Rockefeller Foundation in cooperation with other groups has been striving to find out what is normal in human society. Also, highly-trained and intelligent life insurance men have realized the enormous profit which would result from any scientific factor which could prevent, and in the majority of cases cure, at least half of the mental and the physical diseases of man.)

It also happens that such an exact scientific standard for psychology—as keyed in the ancient time-capsule—will not only coordinate all the sciences, but will also unify knowledge, to your satisfaction.

The intriguing history of what led up to the construction of the ancient time-capsule, the Great Pyramid, will be presented in the future, but even this very interesting history gives way before the extreme valuable wisdom contained in this ancient time-capsule which has been opened and has had most of its contents verified, so that the intelligent men and women of our generation may now be able to not only understand, but also apply this correct knowledge for their own benefit and the welfare of the human race.

The readers of *Amazing Stories* have a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate just how fast this ancient genuine science and wisdom, rated 500 years ahead of this time, can be grasped, understood, and used or applied by thoughtful persons who have learned, thru the reading of science-fiction, to keep an open mind and an impersonal attitude—at the same time enjoying their right of constructive criticism. You are naturally familiar with the fact that any scientific fact is only true and genuine when it can be understood or applied and employed by any intelligent person who has the desire for correct knowledge.

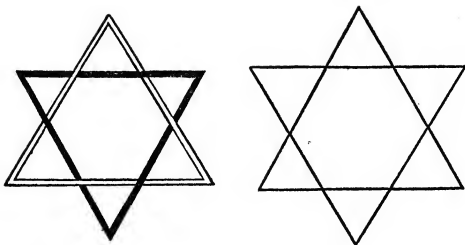


FIGURE U

Solomon's Seal (used as an amulet, although its meaning was unknown, giving confidence through the superstitious belief) and the Star of David.

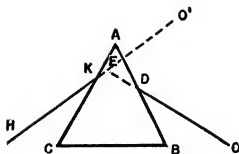
You, the readers of *Amazing Stories*, are therefore more able to perceive that "*An opinion that cannot be verified finally in any way, is a delusion.*" And you are better able to really appreciate the opinion of doctors who realize that "*A delusion is the essence of a psychosis, which is the medical term for insanity.*"

Many persons today realize that co-operation, together with definiteness in language, is one of the first symptoms of a really civilized society—and all the hardy frontiersmen on the borders of human knowledge down thru the centuries, altho comparatively few in number, have contributed to the progress and the mental evolution of the human race, and many of these have been hurt or killed simply because of the inhuman barbarism in the human society of their times.

The barbarism of human society which exhibited and manifested itself in World War II, and the savagery arising from the ills of instability in man must be cured in a way that will forever prevent its emergence.

The M-giants, those realistic wise men of long ago, have contributed their support to our generation's advance, at human society's "Cross-roads", by the genuine science and wisdom keyed in their ancient time-capsule—and so our generation does not stand alone and unaided during the greatest battle of the greatest war in human history for the permanent establishment of the natural rights of man. The M-giants apparently knew that as soon as our generation would be cognizant of the value of their ancient time-capsule; and could understand what it contained, this generation could understand and use or employ all genuine facts that were known about the life experience and the mental evolution of those true and hardy frontiersmen who have lived down thru the centuries of history. Even now, the ancient time-capsule, the Great Pyramid, is ready for action, while the infinite "flame-throwers" of energy have already been firing into the chaos and the confusion of the world-wide psychological cold-war.

Toward the end of the long night

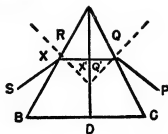


NO. 1

Section of prism showing refraction. The incident ray OD is refracted at D and again at K, the "EYE" (H) seeing a virtual image of O at O'; OEO' is Angle of Deviation.

(Webster's Collegiate)

FIGURE V



NO. 2

Refraction by a prism.

(Encyc. Britannica)

of the human race, thru the deep darkness of the dark ages of basic ignorance, gleam the first bright shafts of the dawn that is really coming, and it may appear that basic ignorance will be burned to a crisp in the coming battle-operation—while the new world-freedom, FREEDOM FROM IGNORANCE, is even now the battle-standard for all those who love liberty. Never forget the words of Patrick Henry, *"I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. . . I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"*

TAG-M and its displacement time-capsule, the Great Pyramid, contain true facts, as well as symbols, and these facts are backed up and supported by the experience of the human race down thru written history, while the symbols have been used in many ways down thru the centuries.

From an anthropological point of view (Anthropology is the science of man in relation to physical character, origin, and distribution of races, environmental and social relations, and culture—Webster's Collegiate 5th.) it can readily be seen that TAG-M and its displacement cornerstone have had

a tremendous influence upon the human race.

It appears that the "Holy of Holies", apparently the symbol of the cube of infinity of TAG-M, was a 20x20x20 cubits cube which was placed in the West side (symbol of the past of the physical events of nature) of King Solomon's Temple, while the entrance was on the East side (symbol of the future of the physical events of nature)—and the Temple itself was on the naturally truncated top of Mt. Moriah.

It seems that Abraham became aware of the great prophetic importance of the M-giants' time-capsule—he is reported to have paid a tithe (one-tenth of his assets and income) to the pre-Aaronic and pre-Levitical priest-king, Melchizedek, for the correct knowledge or wisdom which he received.

In "blessing" Isaac, Abraham apparently gave this valuable information of TAG-M to Isaac, and after Isaac "blessed" Jacob, Jacob is reported to have had a dream in which he is supposed to have seen a ladder extending from earth to heaven on which angels ascended and descended. It would appear that this ladder, which has been called "Jacob's Lad-

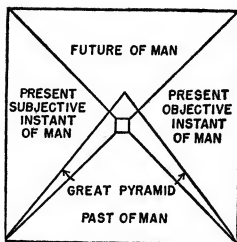


FIGURE W

Displacement of TAG-M truncated pyramids on the North and the South sides of the Great Pyramid.

der", is similar in meaning to the South side of the ancient geometrical time-capsule, the Great Pyramid, which symbolizes the *present subjective instant of man*. (Figure T.) Today, it is realized that "angels" are the symbols of true and permanent ideas (remember the archetypes of Plato?), and the reason that they are pictured as men with wings, is simply because such true and permanent ideas get around so fast when they are understood.

Many people today know that the word heaven is used to denote a mental state of happiness and harmony, while hell means to be bound in or constricted by one's own ideas of anxiety, death, ignorance, sorrow, and failure,—which is another reason why anyone should keep an open mind, since everyone apparently has the choice of these two mental states while on this earth.

Figure U shows Solomon's Seal and the Star of David. In comparing Figure U with Figure E, which represents the lower and upper truncated

pyramids of TAG-M which symbolize *the past and the future of man*, it can be realized that a pyramid is the plane form of a triangle to the mind thru the eye when looked at from the side at any angle. Figure U has angles of 60 degrees, while Figure E is made up of two "triangles" (truncated pyramids) each of which has two 45 degree angles and one 90 degree angle *in infinity*. This 90 degree angle *in infinity* gives the square of the penetrating power of energy which permeates mass or physical forms, and this should be of real interest to at least one large organization in human society today. Solomon's Seal and the Star of David are defined as, "A figure resembling a six-pointed star, formed of two triangles interlaced or placed one upon another," (American College Dict.).

The symbols of the Tabernacle and their relation to the ancient time-capsule have already been written about by others, but certain other interesting factors will be disclosed in future Articles.

When a nation becomes morally decadent—changes are made. The descendants of Abraham were warned that if the law given to them were not obeyed, a king would be needed—and so they finally had a king. Today, the descendants of Abraham have a Republic in embryo.

Any person who desires to become a dictator or a king, is very foolish. George Washington allowed but two terms for himself as President of the United States, and he is on record as stating in regard to the U.S. Constitution, "It was the best constitution which could be obtained in this epoch, and that this or a dissolution awaits our choice, and is the only alternative."

Any "Space-Warp" commander who slips thru the barriers at the

"Harbor of Ignorance" in order to reconnoiter "Plato's Cave" which is somewhat similar in meaning to the Subterranean Chamber of the ancient time-capsule, the Great Pyramid, can appreciate the story of the three fates (*the past, the present objective instant, and the future of the physical events of nature*) who bound man when he was asleep and took his heritage away from him. After much discussion in wondering where they could hide man's heritage so that he would never be able to find it, one of the fates, *the present objective instant of the physical events of nature*, slyly exclaimed, "I know. We'll put it inside of him—he'll never think of hunting for it there!"

Such a "Space-Warp" commander could today fire a "time-torpedo" at the barriers of the "Harbor of Ignorance", which would not only demolish those barriers, but which would also force the people in "Plato's Cave" to turn around and flee—leaving their personal hypnotism behind.

The Sphinx, the androsphinx (male sphinx), at Gizeh has been somewhat of a riddle to persons down thru the centuries—and is like a real "Space-Warp" commander of olden time. The Sphinx faces the East, symbol of *the future of the physical events of nature*, (the "dawn" which is actually coming during the time of our generation,) and is apparently the sculptured figure representing a wise man from the past with the body of a recumbent lion and a head which symbolizes high intelligence. It could remind you of a wise man from long ago who faces the dawn or morning sun (Harmachis), and who is looking into the events and the mental evolution of our generation from a point in time that is long ago. The Sphinx is within a mile from the

Southeast corner of the Great Pyramid. Wouldn't it be intriguing if there were a symbol of the Sphinx on the reverse side of the Great Seal of Great Britain?

The Sphinx at Thebes, a female-sphinx, is supposed to have presented a riddle to all of those who passed by and, if they were unable to solve it, destroyed them. The riddle: what creature walks in the morning upon four feet, at noon on two, and in the evening on three? The Answer: Man, as a baby on hands and knees, later on upon his own two feet, and in old age with the staff of wisdom in his hand. (Hebrews 11:21 "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, *leaning upon the top of his staff.*")

Always remember, when there is smoke, there is apparently fire. Just as the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx, is Man, so the Great Pyramid—the ancient time-capsule—contains the fundamental principle for the genuine science of man, among other many great scientific facts.

The "Step-pyramid" at Sakkara, almost sixteen miles south of Cairo, is said to be the oldest pyramid in Egypt, and it has been claimed in some reports to have had a construction which seems to have been of an experimental nature. The purpose of this pyramid has been clothed in mystery, since the Pharaoh who resigned at the time of its construction (claimed in reports to have been Zoser of the Third Dynasty) was buried in a large underground tomb near Abydos.

The underground room or chamber of the "Step-pyramid" at Sakkara was reported to have been superbly finished in blue tile—which appears to have significance when the position of the so-called "King's Cham-

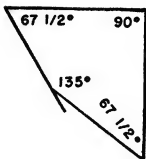


FIGURE X

Dr. W. H. Wollaston's angles for camera lucida which were not discovered until early in the nineteenth century.

ber" or Upper Light Chamber in the *visible* spectrum of radiant energy symbolizes in the Great Pyramid is considered.

During the supposed reign of Zoser in the Third Dynasty, there lived a great man who was a great prince of the Third Dynasty, next to Zoser himself (according to reports), whose name was Imhotep. There have been many legends and a great tradition concerning Imhotep who was apparently not only a great prince, but also an excellent architect, chief physician to the Pharaoh, and the High Priest of Heliopolis. The great tradition regarding Imhotep compelled people in late centuries to look upon him as the Greeks looked upon Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine. Persons who are informed concerning what is known about this wonderful man believe that architects, mathematicians, physicians, and others could actually learn some wonderful facts about their different fields of endeavor from the work of this historical and legendary figure—while it appears that Imhotep was in the line of those who carried thru the M-giants' plans for the later construction of the world's greatest wonder, the Great Pyramid, the most useful time-capsule ever planned and constructed.

In Figure K, the line VN which is

approximately 380 feet (12 pyramid inches to the foot) symbolizes the wavelengths of extreme visible violet (wavelengths of violet are 385 milli-microns), while the *visible* base of the Great Pyramid, approximately 760 feet, symbolizes the wavelength of red (760 millimicrons). In this way, the M-giants of long ago apparently directed attention to what was keyed within the Great Pyramid between the symbolized wavelengths of red and extreme visible violet in the *visible* spectrum of radiant energy, from the square of the *visible* base, approximately 760 feet square, to the upper square, approximately 380 feet square, which was above the so-called "King's Chamber" or Upper Light Chamber and the five chambers of construction. The construction of the Great Pyramid above this upper square was lower in character and quality, since here the fine work of the lower part was apparently not necessary.

So far, only a very small cross-section of the "refraction" of the sixth sense of man down thru centuries up

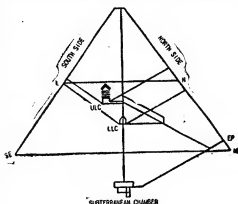
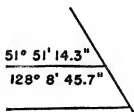


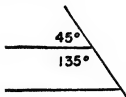
Figure K

East view of cross-section of Great Pyramid. ULC, upper light chamber, which has been called also KC, "King's Chamber". LLC, lower light chamber, also "Queen's Chamber". EP—Entrance Passage. VN—Symbolical of violet wave-length. SE-NE—Base of Great Pyramid, symbolical of red wave length.

FIGURE V



Slope angle of Great Pyramid,
(angles by McCarty)



Slope angle of standard truncated TAG-M
pyramid.

until now has been touched upon, but let us now consider one of the physical senses partially displaced by the sixth sense of man, as apparently keyed in the ancient time-capsule.

Refraction is "The deflection from a straight path suffered by a ray of light, heat, sound, or the like, in passing obliquely from one medium into another in which its velocity is different, as from air into water or from a denser to a rarer layer of air"—(Webster's Collegiate 5th). Figure V shows two geometrical pictures of refraction: No. 1 is a section of a prism, showing refraction, while No. 2 has dotted lines which take on significance when comparison is made with the air-channels or "ventilators" of the so called "King's Chamber" in Figure K—at the same time remembering that the "King's Chamber" is a part-displacement in the South side of the Great Pyramid of the CHAMBER OF THE ENLIGHTENED OR THE GRAND ORIENT (*the cube of infinity*), while *the present subjective instant of man* truncated pyramid of TAG-M is also partially displaced by the Great Pyramid on its South side.

Even the philosophers of the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. knew that the sixth sense of man is within man and sees thru the lens of the eye. *The present subjective instant of man* (which is within man) and *the present objective instant of the phy-*

sical events of nature are partially displaced on the South and the North sides of the Great Pyramid respectively and are connected by the passageways and so called "ventilators" (Figure W).

About the beginning of the nineteenth century Dr. William Wollaston invented a simple form of the camera lucida (chamber of light) which gives bright and erect images for drawing in perspective. In Figure X is a geometrical picture of the angles of a four-sided prism of glass which has one angle of 90 degrees, the opposite angle of 135 degrees, while the two remaining angles are each $67\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, represented in position and cross-section. When the pupil of the eye is held over the edge of the prism at A, one sees the image of the object with one half of the pupil and the paper with the other half. The image is formed by successive total reflection at the surfaces BC and AB. An inverted image (first image) is formed in the face BC, and then an image of this image is formed in AB, and it is the outline of this second image seen projected on the paper that is traced by the pencil. It is desired for two reasons that the image should lie in the plane of the paper, and this can be secured by placing a suitable lens between the object and the prism. If the image does not lie in the plane of the paper, it is impossible to see it and the pencil point clearly at the

same time. Moreover, any slight movement of the head will cause the image to move relatively to the paper, and will render it difficult to obtain an accurate drawing. The field of the camera lucida was much larger than that of the camera obscura, while there was no appreciable distortion. It was used largely for copying, for reducing or enlarging existing drawing. (Encyc. Britannica)

In comparing Figure K with Figure X, it perhaps can be perceived that the outline from the "King's Chamber" via "ventilator" or air-channel to the outside slope of the Great Pyramid, thence down the slope to the entrance, and down the descending passageway to where the ascending passageway to the "King's Chamber" is contacted, gives the outline of a type of camera lucida somewhat similar to the one of Wollaston which is shown in Figure X.

Figure Y shows the slope angles of a standard truncated pyramid from TAG-M (135 degrees and 45 degrees) and the Great Pyramid (128 degrees, 8', 45.7" and 51 degrees, 51', and 14.3") totaling 180 degrees of the inside line of the slope of each. (Figure V, W, X, and Y will be analyzed in greater detail in future TAG-M Articles.)

In the coming disclosure of the fundamental principle of man, actual scientific facts which have remained unknown or not systematized down thru the centuries—altho these wonderful facts were always keyed in the ancient time-capsule, the Great

Pyramid—are to be presented. The readers of *Amazing Stories* will be able to actually receive carefully verified scientific facts concerning the fundamental principle of man which allow psychology to have an exact scientific basis which could only have been achieved and accomplished by the most complete concentration and introspection ever attempted. In fact, what has been accomplished has been thought to have been impossible not only down thru the centuries, but even during our time. You may yet fully realize that one of today's scouts on the borders of human knowledge was true to a trust—and was forced to act on the credo "One for all...", even under handicaps.

The M-giants apparently realized how the opening of the ancient time-capsule would actually shock the people of our generation—until the hysteria subsided—and they also apparently were aware of the great responsibility which now faces intelligent persons of our generation.

When you are actually sure that the facts set down in future Articles of the TAG-M series are correct, do you believe that it may be a little more self-evident that what today's Man (the human race) knows and understands about the sixth sense of the mind thru the physical sense of sight, is only fragmentary in relation to the complete picture of what life is?

READ ARTICLE 6 NEXT MONTH
THE END

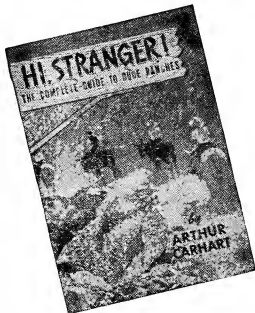
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The CLUB HOUSE

Where science fiction fan clubs get together.

Conducted by **ROG PHILLIPS**

WHEN YOU read this the Cincon will be over. It was the World Science Fiction Fan Convention—a unique thing; a convention of fans devoted to a type of literature, some of them travelling half way around the world to be there.

Are they fanatics? What is a fanatic? The Readers Digest recently defined a fanatic as one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject. In that sense a sfan is far from a fanatic. His subject embraces all subjects, and most of them rather deeply and seriously, from mimeography to the atom pile, from the planets to Korzybski and non-Aristotelian psycho-logic, from Freud to feudin'. Then what about the other part—won't change the subject. If you call crankin' a mimeo not changing the subject, then some fans are fanatics at publishing. If you call collecting every bit of sf literature, not changing the subject, there are a few fanatics.

Perhaps fandom's greatest claim to fanaticism is its intolerance of prejudice and narrow viewpoints, its driving urge to free the individual mind of the normal lack of vision and its attempt to gain the larger perspective of all things that science fiction attempts to portray in its many and varied stories.

A few dozen or few hundred fans will, when this appears in print, have gained memories they will never forget, and friends they will always have, and prize things from the auction that they will always keep. One of my own prized possessions is the original of the cover for "Starship From Sirius" with its vivid colors and its scene that I myself created in words before the artist put it into form and color.

Many of those who will have attended the Cincon will be beginning the fall term in the various colleges and universities. Some of them will some day be the scientists who transform the millions of dollars spent for scientific research into concrete realization of the devices "invented" by sf authors. Some of those who attended may be—and probably will be—on the first man-carrying device to leave the Earth, when it is built.

I will in all probability have attended

the Cincon. If I was there I was probably looking at this ganging youth and that studious fellow and trying to sense the future for him—guess at his potentialities and his ability to develop them. I, in my own conceited way, will probably be happy at the thought that perhaps some of those there would not have been there but for my work in the CLUB HOUSE, and that because of me those few, who would not have been there otherwise, have richer experiences and memories.

Sometimes I like to think that maybe someday someone will perfect some scientific device or discover some great truth as a direct outgrowth of his having read something I wrote in one of my stories, so that I indirectly, will have contributed something to mankind. So, if I attend the Cincon, I will have a personal interest in every one there, from adult, professional authors to just kids—and especially just kids, because the "just kids" are learning from fandom the drama and romance of scientific discovery and progress, and many of them will go into some phase of a science or technology because of its appeal in that direction.

There will be many who will soon leave fandom behind and perhaps even science fiction, to take up golf or gin rummy or something else. But they will take something with them from fandom, and from the Cincon. They will take a deeper sense of American humor, a deeper appreciation of the imaginative faculty, and a broader perspective of all problems. If nothing else, some of them will take with them a skill at stenciling and at running a mimeograph.

Yes, some of those who attend the Cincon won't be in fandom in 1950. Someday none of the fanzines being published now will be published. But others will take their place, inevitably.

We can't think of that, though. The friends you made at the Cincon are here, now. They are worth having. They speak your language. And next year? Where will the World Science Fiction Convention be held? Washington D.C.? Portland Oregon? Denver Colorado? It will have been decided by the time you read this. Wherever it is, it will be bigger and better than the biggest and best one to date!

In line with that I have on hand a letter from the president of the WSFA, the club in the nation's Capitol:

Dear Rog:—

Just a few lines to bring you up to date on the latest doings of the Washington Science-Fiction Association.

The programs of recent meetings have been exceptionally good. At one meeting, we had a talk by Captain James A. Saunders (USN Retired), Lecturer in General Semantics at the Graduate School of the Department of Agriculture, formerly Chief Liaison Officer to the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, and a Trustee of the Institute of General Semantics. He gave a talk on the principles of General Semantics.

While the American Bookseller's Association were holding their Annual Convention here in Washington, D.C., we had visits from David Kyle (Gnome Press), Mel Korshak (Shasta Publishers), Tim Williams (Prime Press), Abe Kline (Representative of the Associated Fantasy Publishers), and others. It is interesting to note that a stall was devoted exclusively to Science-Fiction and Fantasy at the ABA Convention for the first time in history.

At the meeting before last, we were honored by a visit from George O. Smith, famous writer of VENUE EQUILATERAL,

NOMAD, PATTERN FOR CONQUEST, and other stories.

Washington has voted to put in a bid for the 1950 Eighth World Science-Fiction Convention. Considerable enthusiasm for this proposal has already been worked up among the pros and fans. Among the fans boosting for Washington in '50 are such famous fens as David A. MacInnes (Editor of NECROMANCER), Roy W. Lean, Jr. (Editor of THE SCIENCE-FICTION BOOKMAN), W. Leslie Hudson (Secretary-Treasurer of NFFF), Goldberg Soda (Elected No. 1 Fan at the Tor-Con), and others.

Many pros have said they were in favor of Washington in '50, and some have even volunteered to appear on the program. Among the pros boosting Washington in '50 are E. E. Smith, G. O. Smith, and well known Rocket Expert Willy Ley.

If WSFA gets the Eighth World S-F Convention, we expect to make it the largest and best in the history of Science-Fiction. It's a large order, but we think we can do it. For in addition to a superb program, we can offer visiting fens all the attractions of the Nation's Capital—sight-seeing tours of the Supreme Court, Lincoln and Washington Memorials, Jefferson Memorial, Mount Vernon, and other public buildings and monuments.

And there are many sights in Washington of particular interest to Science-Fic-



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tion fans. The Library of Congress, where many of the rarer items may be seen. The Smithsonian institute, currently featuring a display of the Goddard Rockets. The Museum of Natural History, where a complete full-size model of a giant Kraken may be seen, in addition to Dinosaur skeletons and other items. Not to mention the Naval Observatory, and other scientific displays.

In addition, Washington is in a superb location for traveling...it can be easily reached from almost any point in the nation. It is far enough South so that the Southern fans will not find a visit too great a burden, and yet close enough to the large centers at Philly and N. Y. to insure a terrific turnout for a Convention.

The second issue of our official fanzine, QUANTA, is out. You have no doubt received your copy by now. The third issue is in the mill, and promises to be the best yet.

That's all for now. But keep up the good work in THE CLUB HOUSE.

Sincerely yours,

Louis E. Garner, Jr.
President, WS-F.A.

Good luck, Louis. I hope you and the WSFA got it; but whoever did, we're all behind them.

* * *

FANTASY-TIMES James V. Taurasi, 137-03 Thirty-second Ave., Flushing, New York, 10c, 12/\$1.00; twice a month. The first June number is on hand, and also a long letter from Jim. First, the zine. Arthur Jean Cox reports in a well written article on page 2 that the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society had a booth in the hobby show at the Shrine Auditorium. Many people were attracted to it and dozens of potential members were gained. That's a good idea. One fan club I know of gained members by posting notices of meetings at various magazine stands where sf magazines were sold.

Also reported in F-T is a new prozine coming out in September, which will sell for 35c and be published by a Chicago publishing company—the one that puts out FATE. In Lester Mayer's department, "Fantasy Films, Radio and Television" is the interesting news that producer Preston Sturges is dying to put the comic strip, "Li'l Abner" on the screen as a musical fantasy. I hope he does. That would be something!

Now for the letter.

Dear Rog:

It's been a long time since I wrote to you, but there have been many reasons. Moving from one place to another takes time and then my job takes up quite a bit of time, so that putting out Fantasy-Times, I have little time to write, tho I wish I had much more.

I want to thank you very much for the many swell reviews of Fantasy-Times in your column. They have been very helpful and we have been operating in the black for the last six months. We have, by establishing a mimeographing center in Paterson been able to increase our press run of F-T so that we can handle more and more subscribers. You can tell your readers that we are now open for more.

You might be interested in how we work. Late last year we formed an organization to publish F-T, and thus do away with a one-man-run magazine. The owners of Fantasy-Times are now Ray Van Houten, John Giunta, J. Russell Mars, and myself. We work like this: Ray Van Houten handles all the departments of F-T including the typing of the stencils. He also handles the mimeographing of the planned colored covers, doing as many of them as he has time for. He is a busy boy, doing interiors and covers for WEIRD TALES, a number of cartoon strips for comic magazines, etc.. He also keeps an eye on our format and woe is us if we go out of our planned format. J. Russell Mars handles the book column and does odds and ends in typing and other items. I handle the news department and act as general editor to see that the mag comes out looking like one mag instead of a number of small ones. I might add that Arthur Jean Cox, our west coast representative is a very valuable man, always on the lookout for news and handles our "Cosmic Reporter". Dr. Gardner keeps an eye on our science and does a darn good job with his annual 19-- in Science Fiction. Alvin R. Brown is away at present, catching up with college that he missed while in the army. Milton A. Rothman handles the Philly area and sends in reports from there. My sister, Camela Marceau, does all our Spanish translations for the international edition of F-T. It takes such a setup to try to give the readers of science fiction a worthwhile fan magazine. I hope we are doing so. Oh, oh, I must not forget our Lester Mayer, Jr., who keeps his eyes open for movie news and does an excellent job with his Movie, Radio, and Television column.

I'm also enclosing our latest "International Edition" for review in your column. We are now mailing the I-E to any fan outside the U.S. that requests it. It is also the first fan mag to be printed in both English and Spanish.

Again thanks for everything.

James V. Taurasi.

O.K., Jim. Glad you are making a success of your fanmag, but you and your fellow workers deserve it from the consistent good quality of your fanzine.

SPACEWARP: 15c, 2/25c; Arthur H. Rapp, 2120 Bay St., Saginaw, Michigan. Art likes variety. On the back page where he has a list of things like "You'll get one more copy before your sub expires", etc. with a square for a check mark, on the May number he has a check on my copy

before the remark, "Either I exchange with you, or you review fanzines somewhere, or you don't deserve to get this at all." But on the June number it's changed to "Hah, you big wheel you! You must review fanzines somewhere to deserve this free copy."

That characterizes Spacewarp. Humorous, Healthy, Unusual, Murderous Or Rorarious, Take the latest in the June Spacewarp, an introduction to Roscoism. "The following is part of a collection of birchbark scrolls found in a hollow tree by a punch-drunk lumberjack..." And in the sacred writing of Roscoe there is this first stanza: "There exists a gay young beaver; Roscoe is this beaver's name, and he seems like most young beavers, but he isn't quite the same..."

"File Thirteen", by Redd Boggs, is better than usual this time. And in "Timber", Art's editorial department is this quote: "We are reading a couple of books...one is a new acquaintance, 'A History of Western Philosophy' by Bertrand Russell. We've tried reading philosophy before, but never got very far before giving up in disgust. But this volume is fascinating. We keep thinking of Rog Phillip's comparison of fandom today with philosophers of previous ages, and whether it's that of Russell's semi-sarcastic style, the story of philosophical conflict down through the ages reads incredibly like a history of a typical fan feud!"

That's what I was tryin' to tal ya! People are the same down through the ages. Fans aren't some special breed of nogoodniks that refused to be born until Hugo Gernsbach started publishing Amazing Stories!

I nearly forgot the May issue of SPACEWARP. In "Timber" is, "Our attention was attracted the other day by an item in Taurasi's Fantasy-Times, recounting the demise of Los Cuentos Fantásticos, Mexico's first stf prozine. Continued the item: the money in publishing LCF was spent as follows: paper \$425.00; printing shop \$650.00; translations \$150.00; cuts including covers \$125.00. We wonder about one group of participants in all this. Well, perhaps LCF's publishers were big-hearted and sent 'em a free copy of the mag, at least. We refer of course to those forgotten men—the authors of the stories."

No, Art, I didn't get a copy of the issue containing one of my stories—and I would very much appreciate it if someone having that copy would send it to me.

Tops in the May issue unquestionably was "Problem in Ornithology" by Andrew Gregg. It's an "interview" with an author named Clark Kramer who was crazy—or was he? Maybe he COULD change into a bird with green feathers...

In the letter column is one by Evan H. Appelman commenting on that deadpan article on magnetizing the brain. Evan says, "Re 'Dimensional Gate', the same effect can be obtained by taking several deep breaths, sticking your finger in your

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mouth, and blowing..." File Thirteen, by Redd Boggs is some department, taking up four of the 22 pages of Spacewarp.

"The Great STF Broadcast" is in both issues. Listen to this synopsis "Having invented a rocket ship, Karl von Heine suggests to John Upperberth that the first flight be used to publicize FITS (Frankly Incredible Tales), thus saving Upperberth's job. Timid Glover Mackintosh, FITS' assistant editor, is given the pilot's job. A mysterious pair known as "The Priestess" and Igor work to sabotage the flight, Igor, failing in his attempt to assassinate Upperberth, whom he believes to be the pilot, is captured and tortured..." huh uh. You'll have to subscribe to Spacewarp to find out more.

VITON: 10c; Roscoe E. Wright, 146 E. 12th Ave., Eugene, Ore.; a group project put out by the Eugene Science-Fantasy Society. This is the second issue of this zine, and is very interesting and well written. "Space Chemistry", by Hugh Cairns and Norman Hartman, discusses the problem of weighing as it might come up in a space ship where there is no gravity field, and a few of the phenomena of chemistry such as crystallization as they might take place away from gravity. Next comes "Fantasy Fireside", an editorial chat about this and that, by Roscoe Wright. Hugh Cairns discusses "The Application of Hypnosis to Learning". The way it is written it is easy to see that Hugh is up on his null A. Then comes a free ad for Old Space Ranger burlesquing whiskey ads. I like the drawing of the distorted skull with its top being blown outward, used to illustrate the potency of Old Space Ranger.

DAWN: the letterzine; 10c; June issue, bi-monthly; Russell Watkins, 2050 Midland, Louisville, Kentucky. The editorial says that the next issue (the one that will be out about the time you are reading this) is to be the special Cincon issue, with some special features. The editorial goes on to say, "In recent issues there has been a great deal of discussion about crooked dealers selling cheap items at high prices to fans. I have had dealings with less than six dealers, so I really don't know if there are any shady dealers, but I do know of at least three big mag dealers who know the value of stf mags and are trying to clean up as a result."

Jim Phillips has first place with his letter this time, and complains of the lack of a feud. He asks, "Where, oh where is a good topic for a feud?" Phil Waggoner has the second letter, and suggests that the editor of Dawn have comments after each letter, instead of remaining completely neutral. Something else he says is of interest here. "From time to time I've sent off money to various fanzines and once in a while I didn't get anything back either. The amount was small somebody said, but it was the principle of the thing. Granted it was the principle of the thing, I don't believe that anybody was trying to cheat

me. After all, everyone makes mistakes. I think that the editors and publishers of fandom are trying to do a good job of giving us entertainment. I am willing to bet that most of these chronic complainers have never written again and ask if they even received the money, have they?" Calvin Beck and J.T. Oliver follow with letters about crooked dealers. (It seems a crooked dealer is one who prices a promag way over what it's worth. In defense of all dealers, they have to make money. Old magazines are worth little, but rent, labor, and postage go into prices. I don't see how a mail order dealer can handle any individual magazine for less than fifty cents unless he does it for love.)

Russel H. Woodman has a long and interesting letter discussing supernormal phenomena. He says (rightly) that the word supernatural is obsolete, because there can be nothing supernatural, but only supernormal—outside normal experience. Evan H. Appelman in his letter leads off with more on racial problems, then goes into a plan for a fandom better business bureau. Next comes Rick Sneary with a defense of NFFF (the National Fantasy Fan Federation), which was attacked in a former issue by Dean Boggs. Rick is Chairman of the NFFF board of directors, and also president of FAPA, and is one of the finest fellows I've met in fandom.

Ed Cox ends the letters with one dis-

cussing the NFFF and what he thinks is the reason for it not being "all it should be". The arguments that the NFFF isn't "all it should be" seem to stem, as far as I can see, from the premise that it should be synonymous with fandom as a whole. In other words, all fandom should belong to the NFFF.

Then comes an article, "World Government", by R.J. Butler. He wisely states that the hardest thing about such a government is getting it started.

All in all, a very successful issue of DAWN.

"STF TRADER": 5c; send subs to K. Martin Carlson, 1028 Third Ave. S., Moorhead, Minn.. Advertising rates 50c per page, 30c per half page. The contents are entirely ads, so that the buyer and seller alone will be interested in getting it.

Since there seems to be some gripes in Dawn, the letterzine, about prices, let's see what some of the prices advertised in STF TRADER are. Well, on page 2 is an ad with a lot of magazines. It prices those of 1942 and older at 75c, and some 1943 and 1944 ones at 50c. These all sold for a quarter new. On page 9 are some for less than their new price. A lot of books advertised, too. Maybe these prices are high, I don't know. I doubt if anybody's getting rich on them. Main thing is, if you want back issues, or want to sell or trade some that you already have, STF TRADER is the zine to contact.



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BLOOMINGTON NEWSLETTER: free to those who request it, P.O. Box 260, Bloomington, Ill.. Bob Tucker. It has a reproduction of the Cincinnati fellows who are putting on the Convention, as they appeared on a Christmas card I received from them, and a nice little talk about conventions. The Convention should be a huge success. Let's of chatty letters to Bob Tucker from his readers, too.

FANTASY-NEWS: 10c; William S. Sykora, P.O. Box 4, Steinway Station, Long Island City, New York. A two page printed sheet nicely done. Not up to Fantasy-Times in coverage, and rather high in cost, but well written and organized. It tells, among other things, of the recent Queens Science Fiction League banquet held at Sykora's place. A good time must have been had by all, since it says that "An eighth keg of beer was consumed by most of those present." But the picture of those attending shows a very nice group of people, and none of them seem to have an eighth keg of beer in the stem.

WONDER: vol. 1, no. 2; 25c, or any issue of a prozine accepted as payment; M. Tealy, 8 Burfield Ave., Loughborough, Leics., England. This issue was accompanied by a very nice letter from Michael which says, "Herewith the second issue of 'W' bit better than the first as far as mimeoing goes, but still a few mistakes. Next issue will be slightly larger. While I'm here, I should just like to say a great big thank you for the most unusual and thoughtful story I've read in some time. I mean UNTHINKABLE in the April Amazing. Many thanks. I never enjoyed a story more. It goes into my collection to be read and re-read. Dare we hope for a sequel? I can dream can't I! Have just re-read your DESPOILERS again with much enjoyment. Sincerely, Michael Tealy."

Thank you, Michael. I received several letters on UNTHINKABLE—all in the same tone except one. That one said, in part, "Just what do you mean, 'It can't hurt me to shoot myself through the head, because I'm waiting for an elevator.'? Of all the nonsense, that story takes the cake!" While I'm on the subject (though I shouldn't be in the CLUB HOUSE), I'd like to say something about those two stories, and a couple now appearing—the two MATRIX stories. In them I am reaching for something. The DESPOILERS was a nice story, by story standards. UNTHINKABLE naturally couldn't be, and the two MATRIX stories could be much better stories than they are; but, perhaps unwisely, I sacrificed the stories in order to reach that last inch into the incomprehensible and try to leave some tangible sensing of that greatest of all mysteries, the nature of the underlying setup of reality. I am trying to get below words, rather than build on high sounding words such as ESP and ETP and fourth dimension, etc.. Korzybski has called us "timebinders", and we are. But, being timebinders,

we fall victim to the concepts of our ancestors, just as much as we benefit by their learning and discoveries. We are hemmed in, mentally, by the little neat fences they built, and which we take pride in repainting a different color each generation. We see reality through their mental eyes to a greater extent than we realize. But when I look at that neatly ordered picket fence, the mathematics and science of today, I wonder if it doesn't perhaps obscure something vital while neatly ordering the obvious. If my stories like UNTHINKABLE do nothing else, I hope they enable others to look, and to wonder if there isn't something we have missed. Only those who try to look beyond will ever stand a chance of discovering if we have.

WONDER is a well rounded zine with two nice stories, by Gilda Haversham and Norm Storer, with news, discussion, etc.. It would be a very nice thing for some of you readers to send Amazing Stories to Mr. Tealby and get WONDER. He will distribute the magazines to British fans.

FANTASY REVIEW: 25c; Walter Gillings, 115 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex. Another British fanzine; but this one is really a pro-fanzine of 32 printed pages, with advertising, and professionally written reviews and articles and news. Of special interest to sf fans is the begin-

ning of a series of articles "which will deal with the work of writers who have distinguished themselves in the development of fantasy-fiction especially in the magazines devoted to the medium." The first one is about Clark Ashton Smith.

—ROG PHILLIPS

THE END

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FORTY MILLION NOISES

By
CHARLES RECOUR

ONE OF the major problems associated with television reception, is that of interference. Interference refers to the numerous radio waves which react with or interfere with the high frequencies used in TV broadcasting. The interference produced by a building or a bridge or a shield of some sort between the transmitter and the receiver can only be overcome in TV by having the receiving antenna above these blocking-out points. Such problems are licked by suitable receiving antenna design and location.

The real trouble is the interference caused by a hundred million sources of electrical disturbance, i.e., electric motors, ignition systems, x-ray machines and so on. Of these by far the most troublesome is that caused by ignition systems.

The average automobile engine is a miniature radio transmitter of surprisingly high frequency. This is because of the spark in the cylinder. Everytime an electric spark is generated, no matter where, you have the production of a radio wave. Indeed the first radio transmitters were of the rotating spark gap type. When these damped oscillatory currents from a spark are fed to an antenna you have a transmitter. The result is that everytime a spark plug "fires" a beautiful little pulse of radio energy is broadcast, ideally suited to cause trouble to a TV receiver.

To eliminate this completely, it is necessary to cut out and blanket these impulses, by putting a metal braided shield over the ignition wiring and then grounding it. When this is done, the energy is dissipated into the body of the car harmlessly. In England this is a requirement complied with by car owners. One is subject to legal action if an automobile causes TV or radio interference.

With the enormous number of TV receivers coming into use, action is being taken to get rid of this nuisance. Fortunately in many electrical appliances excellent shielding has been the rule so that this is a minor problem, but cars are still a great offender. In most cases of electrical interference, the solution does involve shielding with metal braid, by-passing with condensers and housing the equipment in metal covers. But the leakage of oscillatory interfering currents along connecting wires still remains one of the great problems,—among problems which TV owners aren't going to accept passively.

THE LITTLE SQUIRT

By

LETTY LIEBERT

NOW, SOME four years after the end of the war, many of the inventions generated by it, are coming to the attention of the private individual. He can at last make some use of the new products created by his taxpayer's money in the course of the pursuit of war. In radio, TV, radar and the like, wartime inventions are coming into the fore of practical everyday living. This also applies to many other fields.

You may remember hearing about a device invented for our fighters, that is, the planes in both the Navy and Army Air Forces. This gadget was a special attachment to carburetors of aircraft engines. It contained machinery for injecting small quantities of water vapor directly into the intake manifold of the engine for the purpose of increasing its horsepower tremendously and at the same time preventing knock. It was found that a little water vapor injected into the engine caused it to run cooler, smoother and more efficiently. Many planes were built with this attachment—and at critical times, when they needed that extra burst of speed—they got it. Water injection into internal combustion engines proved a sound and reasonable idea.

Well, there has now appeared on the market a similar gadget for the ordinary automobile. It consists of a small section which is added to the carburetor and a tank for holding water. A special metering device feeds small quantities of the water into the intake where it is vaporized and mixed with the gasoline and air. The engine, it is said, performs considerably better, particularly as regards to smoothness and power in acceleration. Thus when you shove the accelerator to the floorboards in an effort to get past somebody, the engine doesn't knock itself to pieces.

It's a little thing but it make a difference. There are many such things to come out of the war, and for anyone interested, the Government publishes a series of bulletins on all sorts of inventions, processes and so forth, which are of value to the private citizen or the manufacturer.

For example, a great deal of material is available on the new uses for acetylene gas, mostly discovered in Germany and wisely seized by our alert investigators. There are literally thousands of inventions and processes which any American citizen can learn about by spending a few cents for the pamphlets published by various Government offices.

THE END

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HOW TO LEARN

By LLOYD BEATTY

ONE OF your editors' pet peeves is the subject of "education." In this day and age when so many people are going to college, when schools are becoming jammed with students, you hear frequently much boasting about our educational standards. This always gripes your editors for the simple reason that education, regardless of what the educators would have you believe, is not a mass-production process.

We boast of universities with enrollments of ten and twenty and thirty thousand students. Hundreds of students sit in lecture rooms at one time and listen to the droning voice of the professor over the microphone. Is that education?

Some famous man, perhaps it was Mark Twain, defined a school, as a "teacher at one end of a log with a student at the other." This seems to be a sound definition. In a day and age when learning and knowledge are at a premium, in a time when science and all it implies are necessary requisites for national security, in a time when applied and theoretical knowledge are important, we attempt to mass produce educated men. It simply doesn't work. The schools may turn out so many bachelor's of science, so many Ph. D.'s, so many "experts", but what sad creatures too many of them are.

Knowledge by our present standards is measured by the amount of time spent listening to a lecturer, or the "marks" one has gotten on a highly standardized test. Is this the measure of the atomic age?

Your editors, who have more than a casual interest in science and learning, believe that teaching you be on a small scale, and that the student should be imbued with an insatiable desire to learn, to find out for himself, to probe, to examine, to question, to seek—in general to, for the most part, teach himself.

There are a number of small schools which employ this technique. Classes consist of five or ten or fifteen students, engaged in intimate casual conversation with their teacher. Such a set-up is ideal, and it should be done more frequently.

Someday God forbid, our system is likely to be put to the test. Let us hope that it will not fail. Learning is a process best done by the student himself, with the teacher as a mere assistant. We plug self-education day and night. It is, after all, the only kind of education. You learn by doing and seeking for yourself, not by answering stereotyped questions.

Our modern world of rockets, radar and atomic energy demands educated men—go out, then and educate yourselves—no one will do it for you. And one thing we do not lack in facilities for anything. And the best way to learn is by doing.

FLOATING ON AIR

By R. M. MITCHELL

THE RAILROAD world, usually the most conservative industry in the world has lately been going all out for a number of innovations that are startling. The type of coach with the dome on the top of course is common news. Less well known however is the new underslung railroad train, a packaged unit capable of extreme speeds and powered by a diesel engine. This unit, which was originally designed in Spain and built in the U.S., consists of rigid stream-lined cars slung between low trucks, and balanced carefully.

The train, light and efficient can go at high speeds with perfect safety. It is like applying a commuter-type car train to trans-continental travel. The cars are articulated, consist of three to a train plus the diesel locomotive, hold sixteen passengers apiece and appear more like busses than trains. Never-the-less, it is possible that a unit like this is just what is needed to give passenger travel a shot in the arm, much as did the first streamliners ten or fifteen years ago.

From France comes news of the rubber tired train! This clever machine uses conventional railroad cars slung on eight-wheeled trucks. The wheels carry rubber, air-filled tires. The rides is described as being smooth beyond belief. There is very little danger of more than one or two tires at a time blowing so perfect safety is achieved here too.

The rubber-tired train has been proposed and tested a number of times before but this is the first time that a full scale job has been built. The train has flanged wheels so that the tires merely serve to carry the load. The metal flanges keep the truck on the tracks. Such a train is extremely easy on the roadbed and of course destructive vibration is eliminated. Thus the added expense of using this type of truck is probably offset by the lessened maintenance all the way around.

It is good to see railroads stepping into the swing of modern inventions. Very shortly a number of steam turbine engines will be reported on. It is believed that they are working better than expected. The Diesel engine has of course captured the railroads almost completely, but we may well hear of a strong effort to bring steam back, especially in the form of a turbine. The turbine type engine runs even smoother than the Diesel.

The railroads, despite the airlines and truckers, are likely to be with us for a long time to come. They are the greatest mass and bulk carriers imaginable with the exception of ships. And they are required in wartime. So it looks as if they are realizing their important role in the American economy at last and have decided to hop on the technological handwagon.

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MAYBE SOON — EH?

By ALBERT LOWE

THE TWO magazines *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures* both have acutely sensitive ears. When the slightest whisper of something occurs in the technical world of rocketry or hypothetical space flight, it comes to the attention of the magazines. For we now know that it is going to be very well within our life span, that we see the first rockets for the Moon. Such an adventure is whispered at, hinted, at, suggested often from everywhere. Some day it is going to be fact—soon we, hope. And when it is, we're going to be in the front seat of viewers, that's for sure!

Every now and then some long hair let's go with a blast to the papers—"we'll have the fuel soon..." or—"it's only a matter of five years and then..." or—"the Government's working like mad on the Lunar project now..." Groundless as most of these rumors are they contain the germs of truth. Just enough tantalizing news is released to keep everyone alert and in a state of constant suspense. We know it's going to happen—but when?

That last rumour which left us gasping was the matter of the liquid hydrogen. The boys are playing with it now, it was reported. They're using liquid hydrogen and oxygen. That was enough for us. Theoretically they should be able to get a two-step job out into interplanetary space—why haven't they? We don't know, but we're willing to bet our bottom dollar that it really won't be long now. The trouble is, when it happens, it will be anti-climactic, somewhat like television. While we waited for the miracle we spoke of its magnificence in awed and glowing tones. Now TV is here. What does the average person think? "Fine," he says, "TV is here—so what? Should I blow off rockets?" Well that blasé attitude is probably deserved, but still, it's a little depressing.

We hope that the same thing doesn't happen with rocketry. Think what a marvellous physical and mental accomplishment the launching of a successful rocket will be! The thought is staggering. Let's hope people think the same way instead of commenting casually, "oh, they shot a rocket to the moon. How interesting. What did the Dodgers do in the seventh into and did you see that Golden Glow came in fourth at Pimlico?" We'll tear our hair out if people show no more enthusiasm than that. It's up to us science-fictioners to keep alive the youthful, exuberant vital attitude we've always encouraged toward anything new and scientific. Please, boys, get the rockets going soon; we can't wait much longer—the suspense is killing us. Take that as an open letter to White Sands, New Mexico. Tack a Neptune rocket on a V-2 and send the two-stage rocket for old Luna. We want action!

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LONG LIVE THE TUBE!

By ART MORIARITY

NO ONE can deny that the longevity of radio tube and electric light bulbs has increased enormously during the last twenty or thirty years. There was a time when radio was just beginning, that radio tube-lives were measured in hundreds of hours. A hundred hours is not a long time.

Today the average radio tube, it is estimated, has a life span of about two thousand hours. This is quite long when you stop and think about it. Furthermore it is an average figure. Many tubes last much longer than this.

Now it seems that recent years have been the employment of radio vacuum tubes on a large scale and in huge quantities. It is a tribute to manufacturers that they have been able to turn out hundreds of millions of tubes with such uniformity and such reliability. But until now something has been missing. With all the "electronic brains", mechanical calculators, complex radar and TV installations and so on, employing often-times *thousands* of tubes in a single apparatus, it is obvious that tube trouble are going to be a problem. Thus, when an electronic brain is working, employing thousands of tubes, it is extremely annoying if one or two tubes suddenly and unexpectedly blow out. This means the whole thing has to be reset. Much time is wasted. Furthermore the same thing can happen immediately afterwards. An answer

The first thing scientists did, was to exhaust to be found.

amine thousands of production line tubes with a life-expectancy test, which gave them a good idea of how long the tubes would last. Then by choosing the promising ones, a greater reliability could be realized. This was a help.

When they appealed to the manufacturers however, the latter decided to do something about it. As a result, it is now possible to buy radio tubes—of course at an increased price—with a *guaranteed* life of ten-thousand hours! This means a lot to scientists and indirectly, to you. Research on the causes of tube failure means greater knowledge and eventual application.

Given half a chance science can produce results. The time will come when vacuum tubes will be created which will outlast the gadget into which they are put. And with the manufacturers of other components like condensers and resistors also cooperating, it is only a question of time when reliability will far exceed our fondest expectations.

When a radar-gun team is tracking down an enemy bomber, that is no time for the set to blow a tube and go out of whack! And from now on, it won't. American ingenuity and research has solved and licked the problem. Long live the vacuum tube!

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